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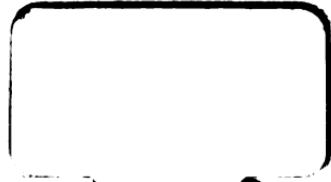
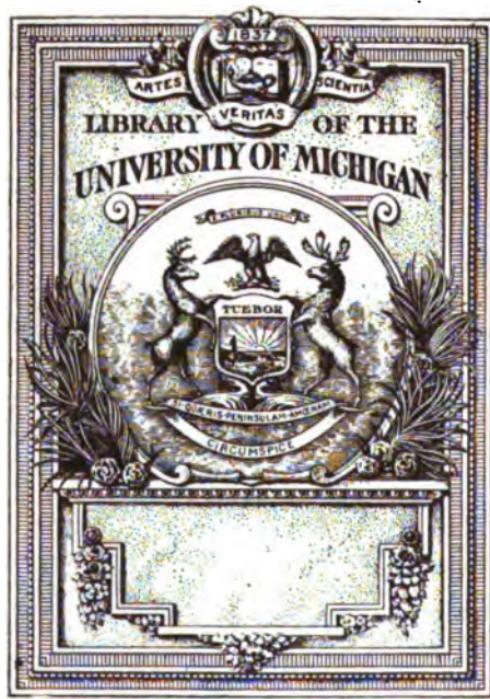
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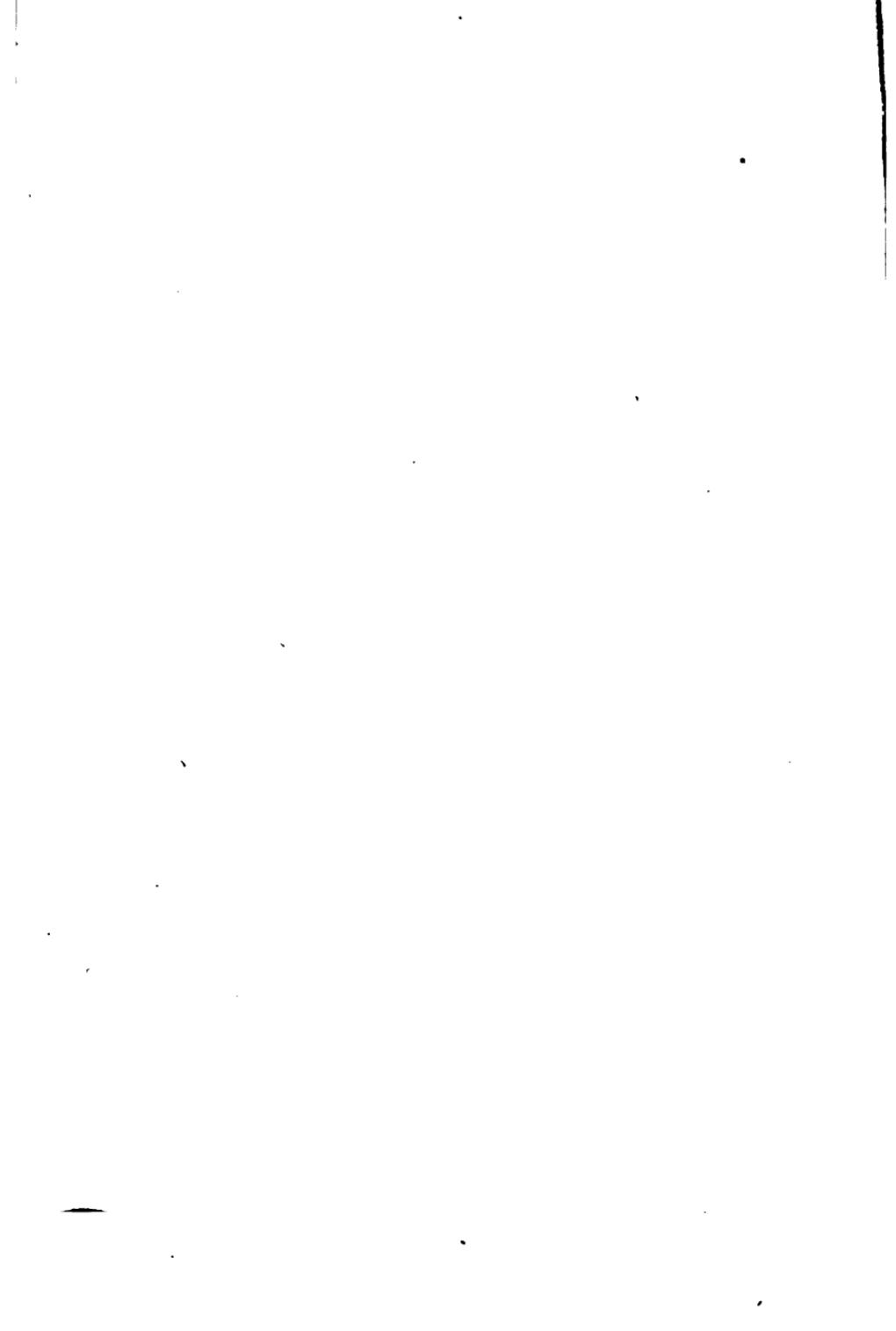
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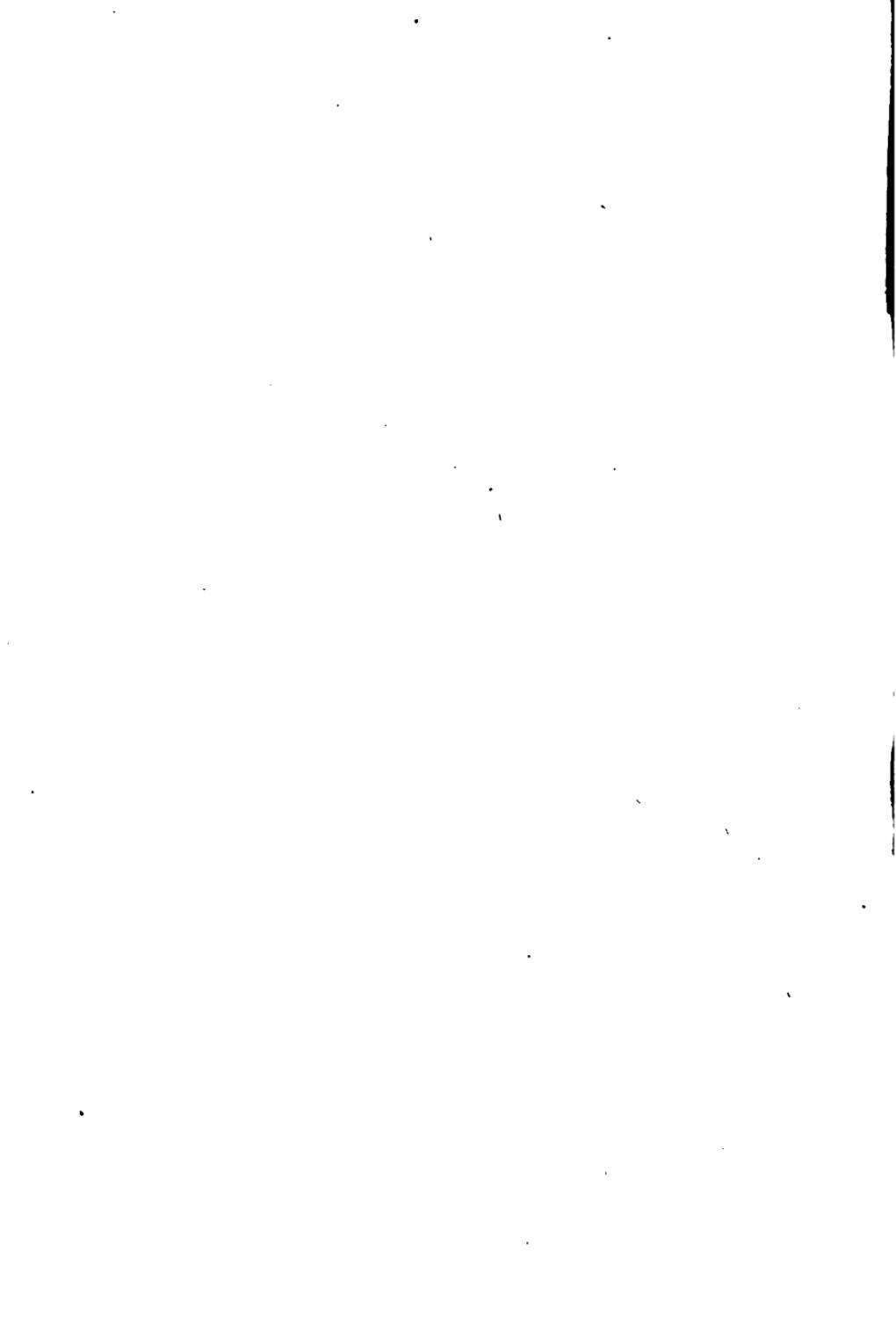


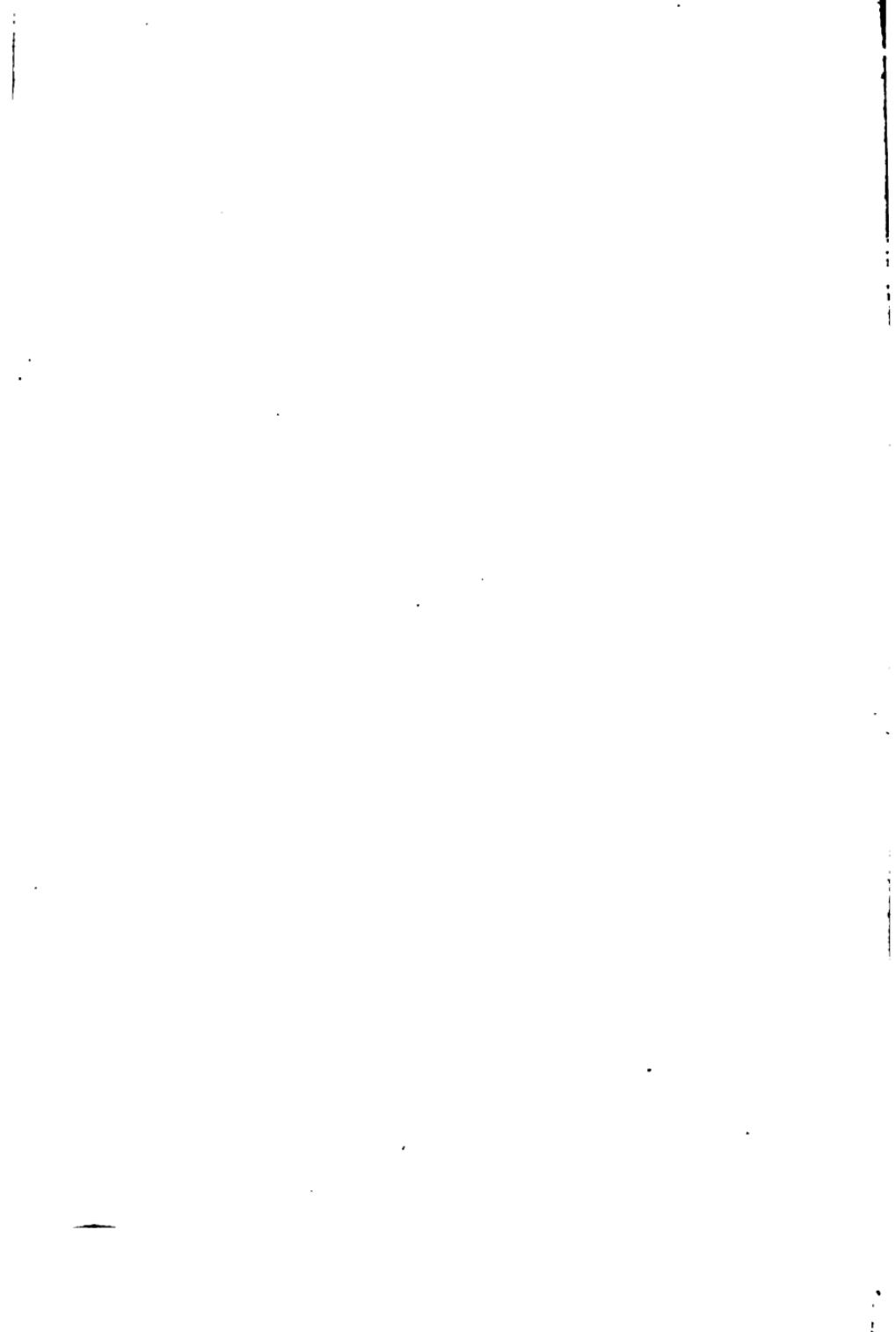
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# *The* HEART OF LIFE

From the French of

PIERRE DE COULEVAIN

*Faire à Coulevain, Hélène*

BY

*Alys Hallard*



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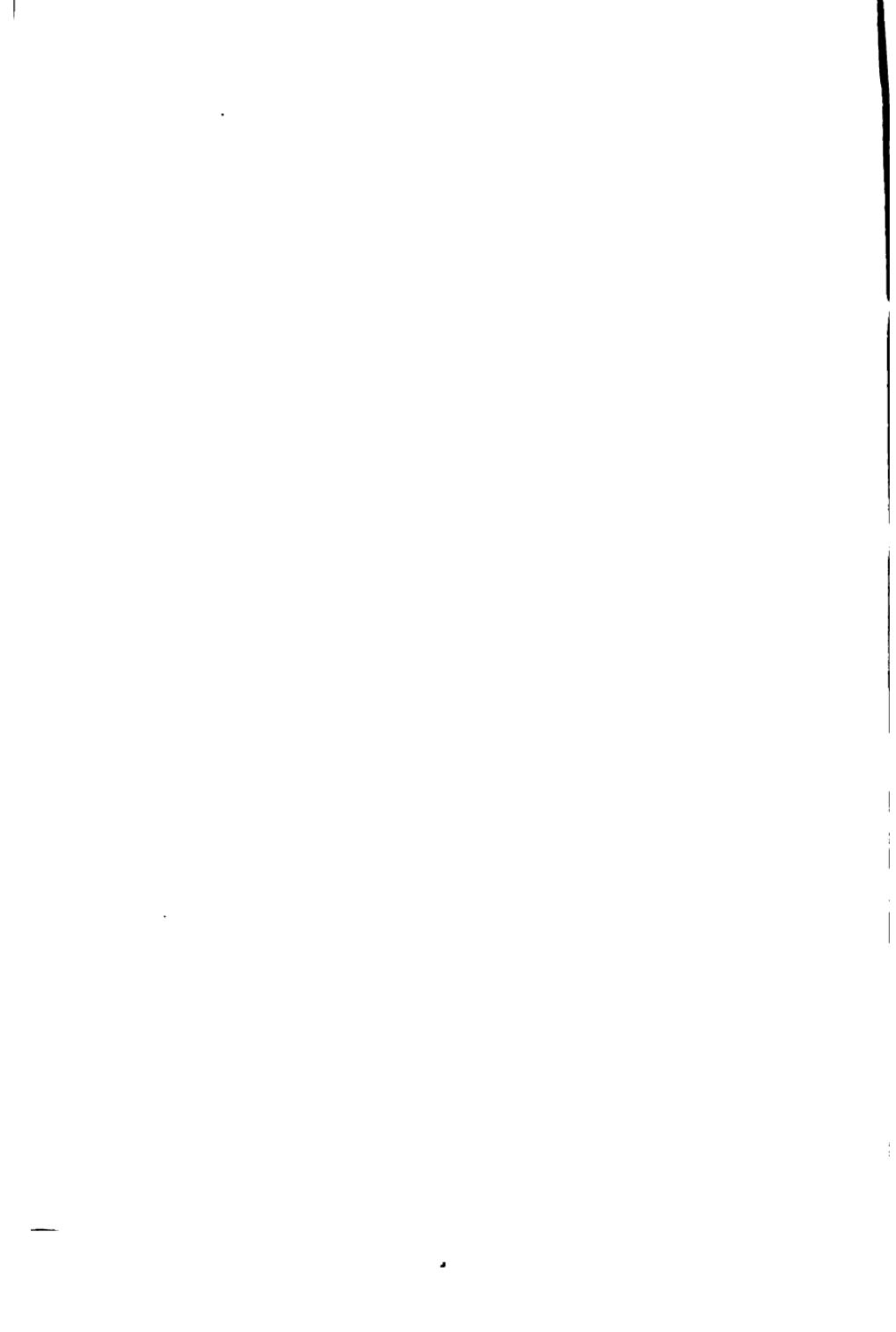
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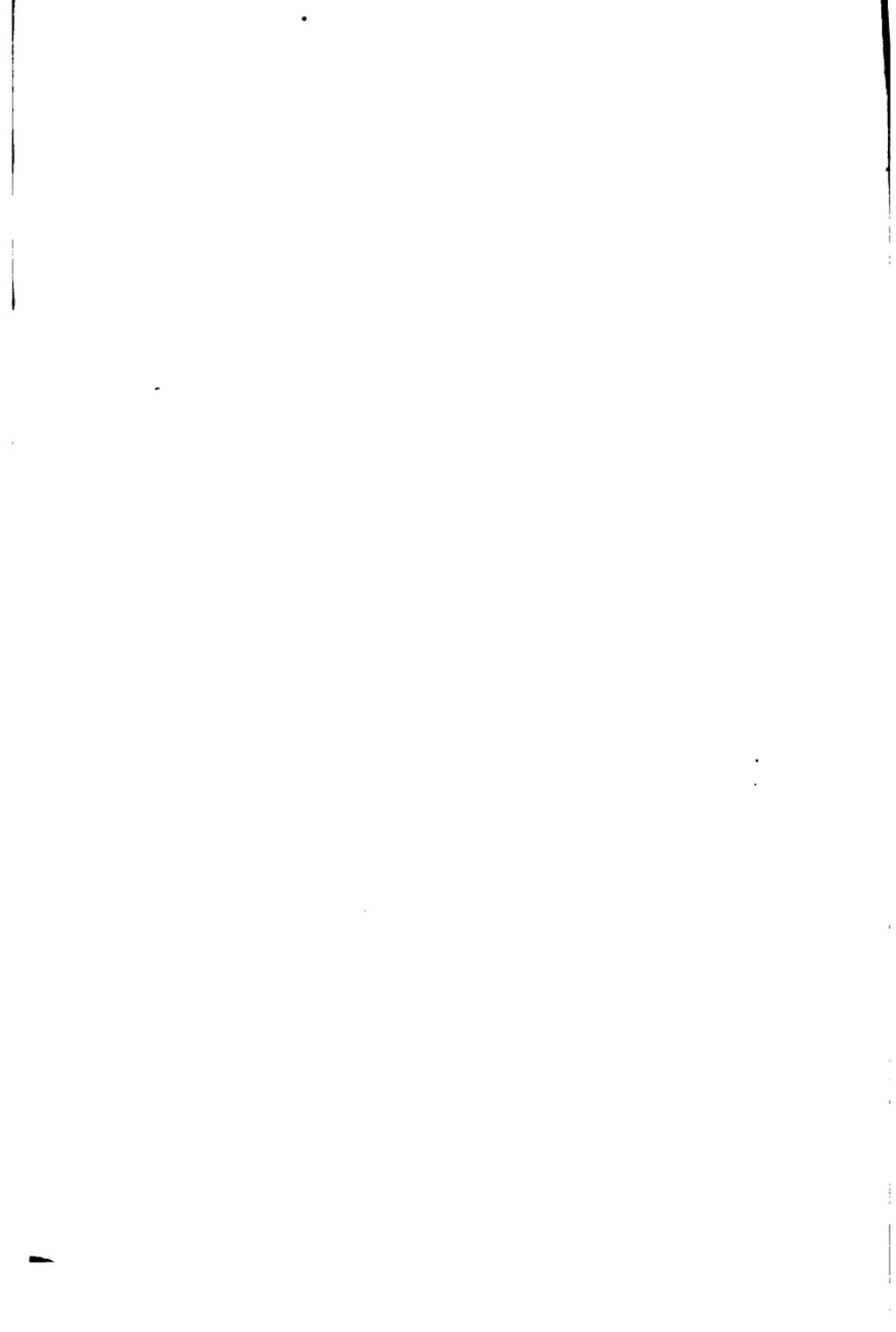
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I

**BADEN**



# THE HEART OF LIFE

*“All things work together and all things concur.”*

## I

*Baden.*

WELL, I have now given my book on England \* to Life. I do not know whether it is a very fine present to make, all I can say is that it has cost Nature and me a great deal. I particularly wanted to finish it on Easter Day, as that is the triumphal day of the year. On my breakfast tray that morning I found a small egg-shaped basket. On opening it a little mechanical chicken sprang out. It was wound up, and in its beak was a tiny yellow book cover with the title “The Unknown Isle,” written upon it. It had been sent by one of my American friends and it gave me the most childish pleasure. My fellow-authors would not certainly rejoice in such a toy, but I am not at all ashamed to say that I did. At present the chicken is on my writing table, by way of encouraging me to give him a brother, and I am thinking of doing so. Yes, I am really thinking about it. As soon as the last word of my big book was written, I felt a sudden sense of deep peace. I had the sensation of a very gentle, coloured wave. This only lasted a few seconds but it was truly divine. This phenomenon has taken place with the completion of each one of my books. Under its in-

\* *The Unknown Isle.*

fluence I patted my manuscript and I said aloud: "It is all right: I feel sure it is all right." A few hours later on, though, I had all the anguish of doubt again. After each one of these *déliverances*, which always seem to me like fresh notches in my staff of life, I begin to make preparations for a little voyage and at the same time for the great voyage. I burn letters from friends and from unknown people. I put all my things in order. This is not difficult, as they are no more complicated than those of a mouse. I then make my will again. In doing all this, I get a certain amount of emotion which is not at all disagreeable. I am quite affected about myself and nervous tears fill my eyes. All this is absolutely sincere and it is both absurd and delightful. This time the tug had been a hard one, and I felt completely drained dry, like the poor pine-trees when they have given out all their resin. I wrote down my last wishes as though they were to be carried out very shortly. All at once I happened to look within myself and, to my great stupefaction and consternation, I saw that *I did not believe in death at all*. I am convinced now that it is like this with everyone. We should not be so ready to talk about our end, if we really believed in it or rather if we could realise it. Life is stronger than death and hope never really leaves even those who commit suicide. The sigh at the departure is perhaps as mechanical as the cry on arrival.

I left Paris with a sensation of relief and an almost animal need of air, verdure and space. Like so many unpleasant things, fatigue has something good about it. It makes one appreciate and feel rest. Baden and the Grand Hotel seemed to me a place of delight. I spent whole days lying down out-doors in

the park. I let the sun's rays, the radium of the atmosphere, penetrate to my very soul. Nature worked within me and on me like a divine *masseuse* and under its skilful hands I gradually came back to life again. I thought of the wish expressed one day by an artist who had very fine dreams. We were talking of the other world and everyone wished for a different kind of blessing.

"I should like to be a good old cow," said this man.

"A bull, then?" suggested someone.

"No, just a cow, in the midst of luxurious pasture, watching the trains eternally, and just ruminating."

I understand now all the human weariness that could lead up to such a wish as that.

Six months previously, a certain title for a book came into my mind. It had made circles and gone on developing until at last it obtained mastery over me and became a veritable tyrant. *The Heart of Life* was the title. I liked the sound of it and, quite unaware of the work into which it would plunge me, I adopted it. Before very long it simply haunted me and, in spite of my secret resistance, it never left me again. It even drove me to Italy. I fancied I should find there, better than anywhere else, the road that would lead me to the Heart of Life. There are hundreds of roads, but the one I was to take was not there. I visited Rome, Naples and Florence. I spent a week in an old palace built for a Pope in his leisure time. It has been converted into a rare setting for a pretty twentieth-century woman. The contrast delighted without inspiring me. In the churches and museums, whilst my eyes were taking in all the beauty and the wonders of human art, I could hear this title, *The Heart of Life*, echoing in my mind like a refrain. On returning home, I would pick up

my pen, but nothing came definitely and clearly to my mind. I returned to Baden, greatly worried by this painful gestation and I was thoroughly discouraged. The day before yesterday a Geneva doctor asked me how I was getting on with my new book.

"Oh, I shall never write it," I answered sorrowfully. He looked at me a few seconds and then said very seriously:

"But you have it within you."

I was startled by the words and blushed as a woman might have done on becoming aware of her maternity. The words "you have it within you" gave me a shock that acted in a magic way. They set my motive power in action and the very same day, without any difficulty or hesitation, I began my first chapter. My book was not to be born, though, in Rome nor yet in Florence, but in Switzerland. Whilst my pen was at work gaily on the white page, I heard a sound at my door. I turned round and saw that some invisible hand had slipped a small piece of paper underneath and that a current of air was blowing it towards me. I went at once to pick it up, unfolded it and read the following words: *In life, all things concur and all things serve — Plato.* "Why, here is my epigraph!" I exclaimed, delighted and, at the same time, excited by the miracle. I was not long in guessing whom I had to thank for this providential note. Among the visitors and bridge-players at the Grand Hotel is a Frenchman, with whom I enjoy talking. He is a thorough Frenchman, rather small, with quick, inquisitive eyes. He always wears an eyeglass and, although he must be seventy-five years of age, he does not look old. His excellent health now bears witness to a well-spent early life. He is well educated and his egotism is somewhat veiled by his natural

amiability. He is intelligent, has literary tastes, a vein of idealism which has not dwindled away with age, and he is a devoted Catholic. For the mere pleasure of arguing, rather than from conviction, he opposes many of my ideas and then, most inconsistently, he proceeds to quote poetry or maxims taken from authoritative sources which are in favour of my theories. Strangely enough he has now supplied the epigraph for this book of mine, so that Plato will collaborate in this humble little twentieth-century book, which will be brought out in Paris by Calmann Levy. It is quite true that in life the living and the dead work together as "All things concur and all things serve."

*Baden.*

How few readers or authors realise what books really are! I have only known something of all this a very little time. Some people like books from a furnishing point of view, others as collectors, only caring for them when they are rare or valuable. Most people like them for the sake of the instruction or amusement they get out of them.

It is possible to love reading passionately and not to care for books. I used to belong to this category of readers and am by no means proud to have to make this confession. Just like cards, books gave me various sentiments and emotions which made me live my life twice over, and yet I was not at all grateful to them. As soon as I had read and lived them I put them aside, just as I might have done oranges, after squeezing the juice out of them. As to the authors, I neither wanted to see nor to know them. I imagined that they had given me the best of themselves, and the rest did not interest me at all. I am sure now that I was right in

this. The confession is by no means agreeable to make, but it is necessary in order to show the Divine work in a human creature.

I regret that I happen to be the human creature, but I could not study all this so closely in anyone else. The *ego*, though, according to Pascal, is only "detestable" when it is vain and selfish, and when it wants to take someone else's place. The *ego* as a unit of Nature is always interesting. I was destined to learn what books are, and, for this purpose, Providence put a pen into my hand.

I wrote two without even wondering how or why I was writing them. Whilst at work on the third, I began to feel the action of the power I was obeying. I felt that my brain was only an instrument and that my work was not my own. From that time forth books have appeared to me as accumulators, psychical and intellectual accumulators. I now look upon them as one of the great forces of Life, one of the most amazing wonders of this world.

In order to produce this force, there must be nothing less than the collaboration of Nature and of man. Nature, that is Providence, must create cells suitable for receiving and transmitting ideas, pictures and deeds. Several generations of individuals are frequently needed for this. Providence alone can calculate the effect of a book and its repercussions. Only Providence, therefore, can logically choose the elements which must enter into it.

The thoughts of an author are therefore guided by Providence and he is sometimes sent great distances in search of the documents that he is to reproduce. Sometimes he is doomed to live himself the life that he is to write. He is kept all the time in a certain current

which produces, in some particular zone of his brain, a kind of effervescence like the fermentation which goes on in wine vats.

The author *feels* his book within him and also outside himself. He becomes its slave and works at it consciously and unconsciously, awake and asleep. The cells of his brain give the gesture, the look, the word he will need just as a cinematograph does.

For my book on England I found impressions stored away in my mind, which had been registered there purposely, no doubt, a quarter of a century earlier, and I certainly did not know then that I should ever write such a book. Someone knew, for someone always does know, and that someone is the Eternal.

All the scraps of life, collected here and there, but never accidentally, form pictures and scenes in a writer's brain. The cells of the brain receive ideas to put into form and the work is then slowly and sometimes painfully elaborated. The author cannot change anything, any more than a mother can give black or blue eyes to the child she bears.

A writer generally finds out from his readers and critics what his book is. There are no two authors whose brains work in the same way, as far as method is concerned. Each one has habits, manias and nervous fancies peculiar to himself and in many cases he exaggerates these as a sort of pose. One author requires silence and another one noise; one works in the daytime, another during the night.

My brain is not very exacting, it adapts itself to everything. It is a *wanderer's* brain and is more affected by a change of pen and paper than by a change of place. It is accustomed to wretched little exercise books which cost a halfpenny each, exercise books such

as a school-child uses; but after all, am I not a school-child? A large sheet of paper would be disconcerting to my brain.

When I rouse up, the cells of the novelist's brain rouse up, too, that is if they ever sleep and I have my doubts. When I lay down my pen these cells continue their work. For an hour or two they go on weaving fresh scenes, they *ruminante* paragraphs. It always seems to me that the inspiration, the *leitmotiv* of each of my chapters, comes to me from my left side. It is from there, too, that I examine the justice of my ideas and that I listen to my sentences.

As to the ebullition of the book, I feel that behind my forehead, above my eyebrows, and I have a very distinct impression that the right side takes no part in it.

I am incapable of planning a scenario, of taking notes, of setting out in search of material. When I try to play the part of an observer, nothing registers itself on my brain. Vanity probably disturbs the delicate work.

What impenetrable mysteries we are for ourselves. I have tried, and I am always trying, to find out the mechanism of cerebral creation, to discover which is the work of Providence, my Divine collaborator, and which is my own work. I do not succeed in this, but I have succeeded in distinguishing the different action of the three factors of the human trinity: the mind, the soul and the body.

The mind seems to me to be that higher essence which is to be found in all individuals, even in the greatest criminals. I call it "the other one," which is what Plato called matter.

The mind seems to me like a little sun working on the nebula around it, that is to say on the soul which the

living cells of the body are constantly elaborating. I have an impression that "the other one" is in direct communication with the invisible, that it carries ideas along, that it is outside us, whilst the *ego*, the nebula, is within, inside the skull.

All this is perhaps absurd, but we do not arrive at the truth of things all at once. I am neither laying down any scientific theory nor any dogma. I am merely searching after truth and that is the duty and the right of every human creature.

The "other one" and the *ego* are often at loggerheads. The former is passionately interested in Divine work here below. It believes in its eternal future; it feels God very near. It is impossible for it to hold out and much more easy for it to accept things.

The second has remained selfish, frivolous and indifferent. From the moment that I take up the pen, I feel that I am being governed by "the other one." Its inspiration amazes me, as it is in such direct contrast with my own character and tastes that my sense of humour is tickled. If only I were free, I should write nothing but plays and stories of brigands.

A still more curious thing is that "the other one" has not the vocation of an apostle. It does not feel the need of propagating ideas, nor of transmitting to others the various hopes discovered when looking at Life. It has no desire to tell its own thoughts and ideas and yet for the last twelve years it has been doing nothing else.

Is this because it has been actuated by any ambition for fame or glory? No! a thousand times, No!

It is very evident that the incentive which it obeys is a will superior to its own. It is serving some purpose. When people express any gratitude to me for consola-

tion which they have found in my books, I feel quite embarrassed. Their thanks have made me blush and I have felt inclined to say: "I am not responsible for it, I think you must thank Providence."

Ever since "the other one" has developed into a writer, or a scribbler, I myself have been in the state of mind of a sheep which would like to stop and graze in a more flowery field, if it were not for the sheep-dog which barks and worries.

I am complaining though, more as a matter of form, for complaining is a habit common to the human race. We certainly ought to give it up, as it must be most exasperating to the gods. Providence gives us, in our intellectual work, an enjoyment which makes us forget time and suffering. The writing of books is a complaint like love, but a complaint of which we should not like to be cured.

During this intellectual work, I have realised that man is merely another cerebral ruminator and that ruminating is a function common to all creatures. It seems as though Nature itself were ruminating eternally, and as though the whole human species ruminated. If a book is to be anything like good, it requires several mastications.

On finishing a chapter, an author is apt to find it good and he gives a little purr of satisfaction. A few days later, he reads it again, and finds it insipid and empty. It was insufficiently masticated. During the correction of the proofs, the author ruminates about his book all the time, at table, out-doors and even when asleep. In this way the weak phrases, the wrong expressions, all that is inharmonious comes back to his mind and is corrected,—that is, it is masticated again.

It is scarcely to be wondered at that a work of any

kind should become dear to the author who has lived it, and lived it over again in this way. When once the correction of the proofs is done, the ebullition of the book ceases and there is silence and a dreary void in the mind.

Outsiders imagine that the publication of a volume must cause the author a certain exultation. I cannot answer for the feelings of my fellow-authors at such a time, but personally I never feel any such exultation and I regret this. I march on towards victory or defeat with that providential unconsciousness which is given to us for life's great days.

The first few weeks I walk quickly by the book-shops, I feel magnetically that, behind the panes of glass, there is something of myself and the sensation is disagreeable, almost painful in fact. The new book has a red band around it, its baptismal sash. A few days later the red band is taken off, and the volume is then put among the other books. This always pains me, too, a little, as it seems to me then as though I have quite lost it, as though it no longer belongs to me at all.

These books, these children of our mind, have their destiny traced out for them, just like that of the children of our flesh and blood. Some are born prematurely, others die almost as soon as they are born; most of them have an average life. Those which contain ideas destined to act as incentives to humanity are immortal. Many of them are not understood, or else they are forgotten for many long years and then, at the right moment, they come back to life again, thanks to some unexpected movement which gives them renown.

George Gissing, a great English thinker, who for a long time was unrecognised, said: "For the work of man's mind there is one test and one alone, the judg-

ment of generations yet unborn. If you have written a great book, the world to come will know of it." Formerly this would have made me very indignant and, in my blindness, I should have protested. At present I resign myself, like a veritable seer.

The most valuable books are not those which run into the greatest number of editions. Books are the most tangible proof of the Beyond which the Divine and the human radio-activity create. They are fragments of the soul of the world and of the individual soul.

Some of these fragments have come to us from across the centuries. The nations from which they emanated have disappeared. Walls, fortresses, palaces, works of stone and of marble have been destroyed, but they have remained living and they set our brains in motion to-day. Like a wonderful radium, they go on giving themselves all the time, and they are never consumed.

Books do not come into our hands haphazard, they are put there by Providence. We find certain words and thoughts in their pages, which act on us without our knowing it and which have an influence on our destiny.

Books are voices in space, voices without wires, with a blank page as a receiver and small black letters. These voices answer if we understand how to question them. And books are all valuable, because they serve Life. Some of them serve the forces of good and others the opposite forces. Only the former ones will be victorious: How the one which "I have within me," as the Geneva doctor said, will develop, I do not know, and I am curious about it. "The other one" has the greatest contempt for the moral; but I, myself, adore it. It is the red cotton which enlivens the weaving, and I shall have to find that red cotton.

*Baden.*

Baden, which society people call "a hole," is a very pretty little town in Argovia, the greenest and most restful little "hole" that I know. It is situated in a narrow valley, framed by wooded hills with soft lines, crossed by the Limmat, a turbulent, rapid river which looks as though it were hurrying to meet its spouse, the Rhine. Human habitations are built from its banks upwards in picturesque groups.

The old part of Baden is charming. A church steeple, a big square tower with its red, white and black striped roof, make it look very German. There are yellow houses with green shutters and red geraniums growing round. There are old signs hanging out, that creak with the wind, then there are hotels with the names of animals, endless flights of steps, short streets and squares.

The one on which the Catholic church stands has a figure of Christ of very primitive art, but it is very impressive. Out in the open air the sight of that flesh makes one shiver; the hanging head is expressive of infinite discouragement and stirs one's pity.

This part of the town gives one an impression of simple, family life, of a wholesome and well-cared-for old age. Baden, too, is undergoing the phenomenon of evolution. It is becoming an industrial place and a factory for dynamos has been started there. The town is stretching out with startling rapidity. There are numbers of new red roofs of strange shapes among the trees on the heights. The old brown roofs with their classical lines are getting rare. The modern dwellings denote a different ideal, and different needs and requirements. They are a curious mixture of English style and new art.

All this may be beautiful or it may be ugly. It is interesting, at any rate, as it proves that there is an effort to reject what is commonplace. The new art is very much in favour in all this part of Switzerland, and it is not surprising, as there are reminiscences about it of German art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

From the station, the principal street leads to Baden-Bains, and picturesqueness is not lacking there by any means. After passing under an archway with two storeys above it, there is a small, irregular square, with a pretty fountain, the classical drink-shop and a cluster of old hotels: *The Cow* and *The Wolf*. The two wings of the latter one are united by a bridge which reminds one, some distance away, of the Bridge of Sighs.

All this amidst the surrounding verdure, with climbing plants framing it, makes a truly Swiss picture and in the midst of the picture there is a person: a woman, with a modest little stall installed on the footpath, embroidering. Thanks to her clearly-cut features, she is still beautiful. I have seen her there now for the last three years, with her frame in her hand, holding the needle and drawing her thread always with the same automatic movement. On passing by her, she looks up and just glances at you. There is nothing in that glance and yet it has a certain effect on you. I should miss that placid face if it were to disappear. On going down another street, one comes to another square planted with a single tree and surrounded by hotels with yellow façades and green shutters. They look provincial and comfortable, and one would not like to have them different here.

One of them, the Staadhof, is now transformed into a dwelling-house. It used to be the fashionable hotel

at the time of the Second Empire. In its wide court-yard the low roofed houses can still be seen which were added to it. The Empress Eugénie has stayed at the first one on the right. The dining-room was just next to it and below the verandah there was a thick growth of trees. Visitors used to spend their days there in an intimacy that must have had its charm and also its danger.

At present, it is inhabited by manicures, pedicures, *masseurs* and *masseuses*. The dining-room is now the English Church, and the trees have been cut down like the laurel branches of the famous song.

It may, perhaps, be an effect of my imagination, but, in spite of the flowers which decorate windows and balconies, this court-yard seems to me to have something of the atmosphere of a cemetery, the mournful atmosphere of things that have been lived out.

The Grand Hotel, at which I am staying, has taken the place of the Staadhof. It has an absolutely unique park, with a shady walk more than half a mile in length along the banks of the Limmat, and a wood with paths leading to the plateau. This wood is one of those bits of beauty that Nature scatters about here and there. A strange silence reigns here. The action of the water and the lack of sun have made its verdure still more beautiful, transforming its foliage into exquisite lace, and this foliage gives half-lights of a glaucous green that are most striking. The ground has a harsh, fresh odour that makes the nostrils dilate. I should recognise it among a hundred odours.

In the background, where the hotels are built, are some splendid trees, a multitude of birds and the warm odour of the hive, thanks to the silvery lime-trees to which thousands of bees come for perfume and honey.

Besides all this there is the clear bluish-green water, to which we have recourse for restoring our health.

These wells were very much in vogue in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Old engravings show us a square with a piscine in which people are bathing in public. Baden has had some illustrious patients suffering from rheumatism. They used to arrive in their closed carriages, or on horseback. We go there now by rail or motor-car. Our grandchildren will probably swoop down there in air-ships.

Those people who delight in railing at progress would do well to read a certain letter of Montaigne's which gives an idea of comfort in his day. Six people were put into one room and, at table, as there were no serviettes, the guests wiped their mouths on a corner of the tablecloth. We shall never know all the Divine and human work that has been necessary in order that we, the present day visitors, get a private room, a good bed, electric light and a serviette at every meal. The past ought to make us feel all the good we have in the present, and all that there was beautiful in the past. This would make us more just towards the gods and towards men.

Baden has a Casino, but it is quite a family sort of Casino, a summer rendezvous for the natives, and the visitors are obliged, by a compulsory tax, to keep it up. It is built on the heights, it has a very fine park, a concert room, a small theatre, a good orchestra and roulette is played with 5 francs as a maximum. The evenings in this little Argovian town are of strangely soothing beauty. Far back where we are, one can feel the sleep of the trees. It was here that, for the first time, I had the impression that they sleep, and they really do sleep. When the full moon, with its kindly

face flushed by the kiss of the setting sun, appears above the hill on the right bank of the Limmat, it looks like a living star coming up from the neighbouring valley to see what is going on in ours and, I am sorry to say, there is nothing going on.

*Baden.*

I have discovered that there are Swiss people in Switzerland and that these Swiss people are not all hotel-keepers. No one seems to have any idea of this and I am very proud of my discovery. It was quite a surprise to me.

I had spent several seasons at Rheinfelden, in Argovia, a very characteristic little place. I had only seen the park belonging to the hotel, the wooden bridge, the Rhine, the old tower and the storks. As to the natives, men, women and children, I had never looked at them or given them a thought. To be in an ant heap and never observe the ants seems to me now the height of stupidity, or rather of ignorance. At present, the Earth-dweller, whoever he may be, interests me. I look upon him as a "manuscript written by the Divine hand." One needs to read very many such manuscripts, if one is to get near the heart of Life.

Every day I go up to the Casino and meet there specimens of every class and of all the places round. In Argovia, alcoholism does not exist as a plague. The race is strong and healthy, the children are remarkably beautiful, with refined features, very blue eyes and a milk-white complexion. As they grow up, they get heavier and lose their good looks. Their movements become slow and awkward. They lack the training which outdoor sports would have given them.

It makes me laugh still to think of my astonishment

when I came here, four years ago, to see numbers of women with an outline so unlike what we are now accustomed to see. Instead of the straight line in front and the rounded line at the back, the women here had the rounded line in front and the straight line behind. It seemed to me, as I looked at them, that the human body had been turned behind before. It appears that the sight of Parisian women had the same effect on the Baden natives at first. They considered them as monstrosities. Such is one of the effects of habit and custom.

With the Baden people, one feels a certain kindness and honesty and a great deal of timidity. Their faces rarely light up, and they have that unapproachable expression peculiar to the German-Swiss. Natural pleasantness, grace and taste are all lacking. They cannot smile. There is a certain dreaminess in the eyes of the young people. I expect they are very sentimental and romantic. I was struck by the religious attention and the comprehension with which they all listen to music. They also read a great deal. I saw books in many hands and more particularly poetry.

In the afternoon many families come up to the Casino and take their coffee or beer there. The wife works at some hideous piece of wool-work and the husband smokes his pipe. They appear to be very happy and united.

I frequently see an old couple seated alone on one of the benches in the park, hand in hand. I am always touched by this sight. They are wrinkled and ugly perhaps, but they evidently love each other still and their hands meet. Perhaps the touch of the hand revives the impressions of yore. That is quite possible.

There are things in Nature which are very hard, but there are some, too, that are infinitely sweet.

There is a most amusing simplicity and *sans-gêne* about the natives of Baden. At the Casino, for instance, when there is no table free, they do not wait until there is one at liberty. They take their place at once wherever they find room. The man touches his hat, the woman gives a little bow and they install themselves comfortably at the table, as though they had been invited there.

An incident of this kind occurred the day before yesterday at my table, and I was literally suffocated by it. It would have been absolutely impossible for me to drink my tea opposite these two unknown persons and, under the impulse of a little fit of anger, I took my tea-pot and cup to a chair just near.

The good people looked at me in such honest surprise that I felt the colour come into my cheeks. I could have beaten myself and I certainly deserved it. They probably thought that my action was due to pride. They would never have an idea of all that may make it impossible for two human creatures to eat at the same table, or to drink from the same glass.

The bars here, as in Germany, are quite characteristic. The barmaids are sometimes very pretty. They are not supposed to merely serve the customers, but to induce them to drink more, and it is in this that the instinct of the Eternal feminine is seen. They ogle one customer, joke with another; they will sit down for a minute at the table with one man and then go away to have a snatch of conversation with another one. They are by turn sentimental, saucy or enterprising. In the end they generally manage to do as they want with their customers.

From a psychological and physiological point of view, the little by-play is very curious. Thanks to masculine vanity, there is a sort of competition as to who will monopolize the barmaid and who will keep her for the longest time. In order to do this the men have to drink and they do drink accordingly. Their cheeks get flushed, their mouths get wider and wider and their eyes smaller and smaller. They laugh in their stomachs.—Germans and the German-Swiss generally do laugh in their stomachs.—The crudeness of the scene is softened by the tobacco smoke. There is a vulgar gaiety about it all, but it is of a wholesome kind, the gaiety of good, straightforward sort of people.

And among these people I have discovered a taste for the grotesque, which is, after all, one form of humour. In many of the gardens there are terra cotta figures, deformed dwarfs, or sprites, smoking a pipe, either lying down full length or standing up among the flowers. I would rather have these than those balls some people have in their garden.

The chimney-sweeps here wear tall hats. These are very shiny, although not glossy. This insignia of social ostentation on the head of an individual smudged with dull black, and armed with brooms and brushes, has an indescribable effect. It seems to me that it is the key-note of German comicality.

On the balconies and terraces, children are often to be seen at play, wearing masks with long tow-coloured beards. In Baden, as at Basle, the Carnival still keeps up much of the folly of olden times. People dress up, disguise themselves and try to puzzle each other at balls, in the street and at the cafés. I fancy that this taste for masks and for the grotesque was bequeathed to the Baden people by the Romans. Stones are not the only

things by which we may trace nations that have disappeared.

There is a great deal of kindness, of humaneness and of civilisation in this little place. Animals are cared for and understood. Cabmen and carters never beat their horses and they never demand too great an effort from them. I have never seen the horse so well cared for, not even in England, and I have never seen such friendly and intelligent eyes in horses before. It is the man who is not civilised enough, who ruins the horse and all other animals, too. In the Casino park everyone feeds the sparrows. One often sees rough, grumpy looking men throwing them crumbs whilst drinking their beer. The love of animals is well developed in Switzerland. It seems that Christmas trees are provided for the sparrows in Geneva. Tiny fir-trees are placed on the window-sills and nuts and biscuits are fastened to the branches. The little beaks that are being famished by the hard winter always manage to find this food.

The Baden cemetery confirms my judgment with regard to the psychology of the people. It is very homely and there is a sort of naïve, romantic sentiment about it, an intuitive poetry. This sentiment is rendered in marble, in stone or in black granite, frequently by a clumsy chisel. There are the oddest and most extraordinary monuments to be seen. They would make one smile, if it were not that in each one some touching thought can be read.

Two French soldiers, Joseph Alliez and Joseph Montay, are resting there under the same stone, in this hospitable and kindly earth. It seems as though their tomb must be cared for and the flowers put there by some friendly hand. I find it is a little Society styled

the *Souvenir français* which is responsible for this care, and I am mentioning it by way of offering my little tribute to the touching attention.

A gentle, somewhat melancholy beauty belongs to Argovia. It gives one the impression of being well-to-do, of having culture and good organisation. On going through its villages with their windows bright with flowers, one has that sensation of peace which is due to harmony. This harmony we may be sure is the fruit of the school.

Baden is going ahead and it is now undergoing the phenomenon of evolution. The dynamo factory, which has been established there, has brought into its moral and material life certain foreign elements which somewhat disturb the equanimity of the old Baden mind. Workmen of all nationalities have come there. There are foremen and engineers from England, France and Holland. The wives of these foremen and engineers form the nucleus of a new society. The wealthy natives who still keep their shops find themselves pushed into a secondary place. They call the newcomers "the electric ladies" and the latter live in villas that have been recently built here and there.

It was at Baden that I saw, for the first time, not merely a perfectly modern dwelling, but an *art nouveau* house. I should never have thought such a thing possible. The whole dwelling is like the materialisation of a beautiful dream. It is built on the heights and has a wide horizon with distant mountains and wooded slopes for scenery. Its lines are in English style and there are large rooms flooded with light and well ventilated. There is a picture gallery and there are cosey corners for conversation in the winter and verandahs for the summer.

*Art nouveau* reigns supreme and breaks out into odd forms. With its hard lines it strikes me as an intellectual art, and, like intellectual women, it has plenty of angles and corners. *Art nouveau* and the New Woman want softening before they will appeal to the mind or to the heart.

The woman who owns this original dwelling-place is a native of Zurich and she appears to have realised something of what I say. I have noticed her efforts to soften the coldness of the style. In the large fireplaces there are logs of wood and flowers. Books are placed about making the rooms look more homelike. Vases and small statues are distributed artistically here and there. The general effect is interesting and not commonplace. In the garden there are velvety lawns, an avenue of trees with roses and brilliant beds of geraniums in full beauty.

On the same plateau is the factory, which is the generator of all this luxury and comfort.

In another villa near, tea is served every day in the garden with an elegance which is another new art for the natives of Baden.

It is very evident that the modern spirit is transforming Baden. The question is, will this lead to more happiness? When one looks at the cheerful little houses surrounded by small gardens, in which the working man can rest himself in the evening and bring up his children more healthily, one is inclined to answer in the affirmative. Providence gives us proofs all the time that it wishes us to have more light, more happiness and more comfort. We have only to look for proofs of this. Hope ought not to be blind any more than faith and love.

*Baden.*

Baden will never be either elegant or *chic*, but it will always be *comme il faut*. If birds only knew the habits and customs of the human race they would be delighted with Baden. I cannot imagine seeing fashionable guests at other watering-places leaving the table with a slice of bread to crumble for them, as we do. I tempt as many as I possibly can on to my balcony and round my chair in the garden.

I see in them, too, "Divine manuscripts," and I am trying to decipher them. Their formation and their coming out is a wonderful page, a perfectly amazing page. In the fragile shell of a miniature egg is a white substance and a yellow substance. The former contains the germ of the species. By the force of animal or artificial heat, this germ becomes a body, feathers of various colours, wings, feet, living cells, a voice, a song, a soul, an individuality. What are all the childish mysteries of human religions compared with the mysteries of Nature. I certainly cannot understand this one, but I admire it thoroughly, and that is something.

And among these little creatures of the air, born in such an adorable way, I find the distinctions and the characteristics, which, among men, make different classes and even castes. Sparrows reign as masters in the garden of the hotel, chaffinches, thrushes and other warblers make their nests in the adjoining wood. The former have all the characteristics of democracy and the latter those of the aristocracy.

Sparrows have quick eyes, a short, thick beak, strong, springy feet and brownish feathers that do not show the dirt. They want a great deal to eat and they have to find their food themselves. This makes them extremely active. There is no time for singing and

dreaming in their life. Their love affairs are very straightforward with scarcely any flirtation. The parents feed their little ones with that business-like abruptness which reminds one of the women of the working class feeding their children with a spoon. Their young ones seem hungrier and more exacting than the birds of other species. They do not describe beautiful circles like the swallow, their manner of flying is practical, as they go straight to the place at which they are aiming. When they swoop down together on food they have a peculiarly aggressive cry. Their chirping, which may be very droll conversation, sounds very much like human chattering. To be convinced of this one has only to shut one's eyes in any hotel dining-room, or at Rumpelmayer's at tea-time. Sparrows appear to be remarkably intelligent and sharp. They play tricks on each other, they hop about with their feet together on the top of each other and they quarrel and fight with plebeian violence. Very often, just as one of them is about to peck at a piece of bread, another comes down like an arrow and snatches it away from him with the skill and dexterity of a clown. The one that has been robbed turns his little head to the right and then to the left, looks up and watches the thief. His disappointed look would be droll if it were not so pathetic.

Sparrows are also born *arrivists*. The one on a lower branch stretches his neck and pecks at the feet of a comrade perched higher up. If he succeeds in making him move, he has a satisfied look that is absolutely human.

The finches and robins, although they belong to the aristocracy, do not live entirely on game, so that they come, too, for their share of the bread that we distribute. That is how I have been able to notice the contrast be-

tween their characteristics and those of the sparrows. They have a slender body, a more delicate beak and elegant, nervous feet. They do not come hopping as they have no spring in their feet, but they glide along. They do not peck greedily, but turn timidly round the morsel they covet. Every mouthful costs them a visible effort of moral and physical courage. Nine times out of ten it gets snatched away from them. They never contend; but move away with fine dignity. Their little souls must be coloured by music. Their flirting and their love affairs are accompanied by songs. Everything is more gentle and more harmonious with them than with the sparrows. They have more feeling, more boldness and more intelligence. Between these thick beaks and these delicate beaks, between these heavy and light feet, there is the same gulf as between men of different class.

Just as I was thinking this, the Duc d' A—— a specimen of French nobility of royal extraction, came down the stone steps leading from his rooms. His slight outline and his dignified mien struck me. In a very stiff manner, and squaring his shoulders, he passed by a group of middle-class people who were talking together in an animated way, and this seemed to me like a reproduction of the thick and delicate beaks, the light and heavy feet.

The day before yesterday, I read these plebeians and these little aristocrats around me better than I had ever done. One has days of clear sightedness and then days of dull vision, and the latter are more frequent. I recognised that each one of these creatures is a personality. I could distinguish the timid ones from the daring, the brave ones from the cowards, the gentle ones from the turbulent, the epicures from the gluttons.

I saw the exteriorisation of anger, envy, jealousy, of what we childishly call the capital sins. And the capital sins appeared to me as capital forces in life, forces which make mankind and animals move, which urge them on to action.

With men, conscience generates the opposing forces which are destined to produce moral equilibrium, harmony and wisdom. This method of improvement seemed to me very simple, quite mathematical.

Are there any worlds where the capital forces are only virtues? That may be so, but these virtues would then have different degrees. Imperfection and inequality are necessary for the eternal play of life. If the tubes of the syphon were of the same length, it would not act. Absolute perfection and absolute equality would mean the cessation of all movement. Absolute death means this too, and absolute death cannot exist.

Among my birds I have seen signs of good comradeship, of likes and dislikes. In all their little acts I have seen intuition and reasoning. It is my opinion that animals have the faculty of reasoning and that man alone can be unreasonable. It is that which gives him his superiority.

No creature has been accorded as much grace as the bird and no creature has as little as man. I am not proud of this admission by any means.

When, reflected in mirrors, you see men walking about like flies, their legs look heavy and ugly, it seems as though they can scarcely lift their feet from the ground, one *feels* the force of attraction against which they are unconsciously fighting and the sight is pathetic.

My sparrows and my chaffinches delight me with their movements. They are so graceful when they are flirt-

ing, drinking, eating, wiping their beaks, bathing and even when they are scratching themselves. In all these things the human being is particularly awkward and ridiculous.

This thought, disagreeable in itself, has given rise to another still more disagreeable. The idea of man scratching himself amused me, but on our beloved Earth all creatures scratch themselves. This necessity to rub the skin is occasioned by some invisible parasite visiting the civilised being and very probably this infinitely small creature scratches itself too. How far back then is the origin of this inelegant and primordial habit?

Whilst watching my birds fluttering about so gaily in the sunshine and playing at hide-and-seek among the flowers, I thought sorrowfully of the severities of the winter which await them. The strongest ones will resist and the feeble ones will succumb and the eternal work of selection will be accomplished.

I had often wondered how these little inhabitants of the air get their food when there are no more insects and the ground is frozen. A workman gave me, one day, a bright idea, which is quite possible. He was telling me about a swallow that had fallen from its nest. His son managed to put it back again. "It was very pretty," he said "but covered with vermin. It seems as though these creatures carry their pantry about on them." Why should it not be so? We are told that:

*Aux petits des oiseaux il donne la pâture,\*  
Et sa bonté s'étend à toute la nature.*

These famous lines had always exasperated me in my childish logic. They are certainly literature, and plenty

\* To the little birds He gives their food  
And His loving-kindness is extended to all Nature.

of wrong ideas are thus clothed in literature, accepted in all confidence and become veritable creeds. As God had created the birds, He was bound to provide food for them. I could not, as a child, see any special proof of Divine goodness in this and I do not now. The Divine goodness that I see is in the joy of their love, of the brooding-time and of feeding the young birds.

Schopenhauer's disciples would maintain that this joy is a snare. The very idea of that is comic. Could not the Eternal God oblige His creatures to undertake the painful tasks necessary for His work without giving them any compensations? Well, he has sweetened all these hardships with a wonderful refinement. This proves that He loves them and that He has pity on them.

I look in vain for swallows at Baden. They are missing in its beautiful skies. They are always my delight on summer evenings. There is intense life about them and no birds have so many human characteristics. The swallows are social birds and cosmopolitans. They live, travel and enjoy themselves in groups. Their flirtations are delightful and the female bird is incredibly coquettish. Their love songs are not very brilliant, but their conversations seem to be strangely interesting.

Their flight is full of soul and sentiment. At times they describe superb curves, and at other times they move about on the same spot with a voluptuousness that can be felt on earth. At other times, too, they chase each other wildly about, uttering cries like those of little human beings. Their graceful bodies delineate an anchor on the sky, the symbol of hope. What a symbol for such eternal travellers!

I only blame them for one thing and that is their fondness for butterflies.

This spring-time I saw a little white butterfly fly in

front of my window. It was coming from the Tuilleries.

"Where is it going?" I said aloud as I watched it.

Just at that second a swallow, flying very swiftly from the other direction, met it and snapped it up. That was where it was going!

I was thunderstruck. It seemed to me that this fateful meeting was not a chance one, but that it had been mathematically combined for the accomplishment of a destiny. A butterfly's destiny!

Well, why not, as everything is taken into account in Nature. Was that the play of Death? No, it was the play of Life and it is just that which fascinates me more and more.

Towards evening, from my balcony I watch the birds fight for their supper; a supper of the mosquitoes and flies which are dancing in the golden rays of the setting-sun. The birds dart from the neighbouring trees, cross the rays, cross back again and disturb the gay dance. After their passage, the dance recommences, but there are fewer dancers, fewer always. Is that on account of Death? No, it is rather on account of Life.

Birds, like men, are the agents of transmission and of transmutation. They are part of the scheme of the world. They are guided by the same power as we are and led towards the same goal. They are immortal as we are immortal.

I suppose that this is so, as it seems logical, and it seems to me logical to hope that it is so.

The day before yesterday, in the afternoon, I watched the sparrows and the chaffinches feeding their young. They inspired this chapter, so that they collaborated with me in my work and perhaps my work may inspire another one in some human brains. Our common fra-

ternity is most evident. I feel this as much as St. Francis d'Assisi could have done.

\* \* \* \* \*

After writing this I could not help laughing and asking myself whether this paragraph was really written by a person who, on a certain day, could not take tea at the same table as two of her fellow-creatures. That was not at all like St. Francis d'Assisi. The paragraph must have been by "the other one!"

### *Baden.*

The heat of the day was over and I was just going down into the garden when I heard an automobile arrive. "A French automobile!" I said to myself on recognising the sound of it, so different from the Swiss automobiles. I listened to it going away again, little thinking that it had just brought me a delightful friend. A few minutes later someone knocked at my door and then opened it.

"Madame Lasserre!" I exclaimed, in joyful surprise.

"Maïa, please," corrected my visitor.

She put her arm round me and the very force and youthfulness of her embrace seemed good to me.

"No one kisses as you do," I said.

"I do not have much practise," she said with a little smile. "This is for you," she added, presenting me with a magnificent bouquet of roses.

"Oh, Maïa, will you never come to me with empty hands?" I exclaimed.

"Never, I hope," she replied.

"Where have you sprung from?"

"Out of the Auranne's automobile, and we have been to Zurich. They have gone on to Schinznach-les-Bains

to see an Italian friend who is staying there and they will call for me on the way back. I wanted to see, with my own eyes, that you were better. You looked so tired the last time I saw you."

"I was, but Baden has cured me."

"Blessed be Baden!"

"Thank you," I said, touched by the sincerity of her accent. "Now we will go and have tea in the garden, if you like. Take your tourist's harness off, whilst I put these beautiful flowers in water."

Madame Lasserre took off her long cloak and arranged her hair a little.

"I am at your service now, Granny," she said, with one of her pretty smiles.

I took her to my silvery lime trees, from which the bees were plundering the last drops of honey.

"How delightful it is here!" she said, taking the cane arm-chair I offered her.

"Just the place for a rest cure."

"It is good to know of it."

Whilst my visitor was giving me news of her parents and of a few people we both knew, I looked at her with great pleasure. Her white serge dress, with the jacket opening over a fine batiste blouse, showed off to advantage her elegant figure. The wide gauze veil loosely thrown back over her hat softened and framed her face most charmingly. Just as she was, with a ray of sunshine touching her obliquely, leaning back, with her arms resting on the chair, she looked delicious. Everyone calls her a pretty woman, and it must have cost Nature something to produce this pretty woman. Her dull complexion, her brown hair shaded with reddish brown had probably been obtained by the marriage of fair, dark and sandy ancestors. The wide forehead, the

straight eyebrows, the setting of the sea-blue eyes, the finely cut mouth, were proofs of skilfully combined selection.

Nature had managed to produce the harmony of features and the colouring which gives beauty, but not the moral harmony which gives serenity. Her changing expression revealed a soul that was not at rest. It also revealed an active mind. The smile which began at the corner of her lips and finished in her eyes was by turn brilliant, sarcastic and tender. I do not know anyone with a more expressive smile. It is Maïa's great charm.

"Why are you looking at me so hard, Granny?" she asked suddenly.

"Because I have not seen you for a long time and you are good to look at. You have the same effect on me as a rich contralto."

"What an idea!"

"Yes, to me there are women who are, morally and physically, contralto, soprano or mezzo, just as there are men who are bass, baritone or tenor. I find these different registers in certain individuals, and the registers are of more or less compass and are more or less beautiful and pure. A number of people have no special kind of voice and consequently no individuality. Some have notes that are not clear. These are beings of contrast and disharmony who have never been tuned. This classification is not scientific; it is absurd, perhaps, but it helps me all the same. You see now why I tell you that you are like a contralto. You aroused my interest from the moment you came into my orbit, or rather from the moment I got into the railway carriage with you. You only just glanced at me and rather disdainfully, too."

"I felt that you were looking at me, though, and I was flattered by it."

"And you kept looking down so that I should admire your long brown eyelashes. You have not yet given up that coquettish little trick."

"Oh, Pierre de Coulevain, you are perfectly brutal," she exclaimed, laughing and blushing.

"I do not blame you," I said, "it is so human."

"Rather silly, all the same. How long is it since we met?"

"Ten years."

"Ten years!" repeated Maïa. "You have written four books and I have been married and divorced. A nice record that!" she added, swinging her feet nervously.

The tea was just then brought and my visitor drew herself up as straight as a dart.

"Let me see to it," she said. She did not wait for my answer but, turning back her gloves from the wrist, she began to pour out the tea. Her hands are not only very beautiful, they are active and firm. On the left hand, on her wedding-ring finger, she wears a serpent, with emerald eyes, coiled round four times. She calls this her divorce ring. It is a piece of jewellery that fascinates me, but makes me feel uneasy. I hope she may never meet, on her path through life, the enemy, whose symbol she wears in such a daring way.

"Are your friends pleasant travelling companions?" I asked, taking the cup she handed to me.

"Oh, yes, very pleasant," she said. "Jacques d'Auranne, you know, is a cousin and his wife is English. They met and were engaged in Japan."

"And does this Anglo-French marriage answer?"

"Perfectly. Kate adores her husband and she likes everything French."

"When an English woman can understand France, she loves it with the most romantic enthusiasm. I know one who lives near St. Sulpice. Her one hope is that nothing modern should come to change the religious and provincial atmosphere of that part of Paris. She was delighted to find that her newspaper vendor ignored the existence of the New York Herald. A French woman would never have felt like that in England."

"Oh, no," said Madame Lasserre, laughing, "and you have no idea, Granny, how grateful the Aurannes are to you for having written on England. They will thank you themselves just now."

"Very well."

"I suppose you get any amount of letters?"

"Yes, an old woman's love-letters."

"I should like that."

"At first they used to flatter my vanity. That was very silly, of course. At present I am touched by them, and very much touched by some of them. I understand better now to what they are due. If I strike a note on a piano and there should be another instrument in the same room, a violin for instance, the chord that is in tune with my note will vibrate and the others will all remain mute. The readers of my books who are in tune with me have vibrated and, in some cases, to such a degree that they have broken through the ordinary social rules of etiquette. Out of respect for that vibration of the soul, I never throw such letters into the waste paper basket; I always burn them."

"Do you answer them?"

"When I can do so at once, while I am under the

influence of the sentiments that these letters have roused, but I must confess that I am not under this influence long. It means looking back and the tide is always carrying me quickly forwards. I was delighted to read Loti's confession in *Les Désenchantées* that these letters from unknown people had become a necessity to him. They certainly are encouraging and comforting."

"And so you have read *Les Désenchantées*?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Tell me what you think of it," said Madame Lasarre, buttering the bread vigorously, "did you like it?"

"I enjoyed it very much. It gave me the sensation of old Stamboul, of Islam and its mysticism. What I like in Loti's books is Loti himself. He ought never to put people into them. His mentality does not reflect the soul of people, but the soul of things. He has the most extraordinary power of transmission, almost the gift of the magnetizer, for he communicates this to his readers."

"In this last volume, I felt, as I had never done before, that he is an Oriental."

"His passion for the felines does not surprise me," I continued, "he has the same extreme sensibility, the nervosity, the dreaminess even. His style seems to me velvety, like their movements."

"I hope that he has not the cat's perfidy."

"The cat perfidious!" I exclaimed. "It is too proud for that! It scratches when people do not know how to handle it. It is just all spine."

"Only that," said Maïa, with a mocking smile. "Well, that is quite enough. Joking apart, though, do you believe that there are really signs of feminine evolution in the harems?"

"In the more princely harems, where the women have their clothes from Rue de la Paix, Paris, perhaps."

"Low-necked dresses, English furniture and a piano in a harem? How horrible it sounds. What a disillusion."

"Yes, we like Nature to give us harmony all at once. That is impossible, for it works just as man does, and man is employed by Nature. It sketches something out in the rough. It feels its way, it tries some things, it does away with others in a murderous way and it lets new ideas spring up by the side of old ones, which is most painful. Nature's transitions, although they have been in preparation a long time, a much longer time than we could even imagine, give us plenty of shocks and there is much that is very ugly about them. It is quite certain that Nature is now giving more freedom to the feminine element."

"And quite time, too."

"In all the letters from unknown women that I get, they thank me for helping them to think more than they had ever done. Women want to think, you see, at present."

"Yes, but they are not allowed to think. It seems to me that Loti, in his book, has given to his Mussulman women the present state of mind of French girls. They, too, are held within rigid boundaries by the ancestral dogmas and old prejudices and customs. When these girls confide in you, do they not all tell you how irritated they are by their own uselessness?"

"Yes, but I will give you an example of what one of them said. She had written a charming letter, asking permission to call on me. She was about eighteen, extremely pretty and very elegantly dressed. She

talked to me about the emptiness of her life, the stupidity of the young men she meets. I might add that all the girls agree about that. She then spoke of the dullness of the political dinners that her parents have to give. She said she should like to take up something like Josée had done in *On the Branch*.

"I advised her to start a tennis ground in the country, near to her father's estate, where the villagers could amuse themselves, instead of spending all their spare time drinking in the wine-shops. What do you think she said to this?"

"I have no idea."

"'Oh, yes,' she replied, 'but the owners of the wine-shops are my father's electors.'"

Madame Lasserre burst into a fit of laughter. She put down the cup which she was just lifting to her lips.

"Well, that is superb!" she exclaimed. "At any rate, we will say the young person had learnt something at the political dinners. I should like to have seen your face."

"My face? Oh, well, I expect it expressed what I felt, a mixture of stupefaction, indignation and pity. My pity won the day though, and I talked to my visitor of the consequences of alcoholism. I spoke as eloquently as I could, trying to prove to her that the health and welfare of humanity ought to be considered before private interests. She listened most respectfully, but I felt that she did not understand me."

"How should she understand you? Humanity is an abstract thing to girls. How should they know anything about it? It is just the same with marriage. They consent to that quite gaily, for the sake of getting their freedom, and they have no idea what they are promising. The ignorance in which they are kept

about life makes them commit all sorts of stupidities. It is cruel, barbarous and silly."

"I am quite of the same opinion," I said. "For the last thirty years I have been living in hotels and I have seen some hundreds of newly married couples. I can assure you that I have never seen the faintest ray of happiness or pride on their faces. They look at each other and study each other stealthily. The man generally looks more or less surly. You should see him when he is kept waiting, not by *a woman*, but by *his wife!* She has perhaps been foolish enough to say that she would be ready in a quarter of an hour. The quarter of an hour is rather a long one, and, for the first time, he feels the string tied to his leg. The sensation is evidently not agreeable, for he chews his cigar. You know that sign of masculine bad temper. The radiant young wife, as we call her in literature, appears, and is quite unconscious of her sins. She does not hear any reproaches, but she probably will later on. The only kind of welcome she gets is the glance of her offended lord. If she is a weak woman, the corners of her lips drop. If she is strong, the corners of her lips turn up. She has steeled herself inwardly.

"I have seen more than one young wife wiping her eyes quietly when she is writing to her family. Both husband and wife have a bewildered expression like two children who do not know each other, but who have been sent off hand in hand to amuse themselves. The only thing is they are not amusing themselves at all."

"Ah, no," said Maïa, "and when they do know each other they will either enjoy themselves or fight. Fortunately there is a St. Naquet on the calendar now for people to invoke," she added, with a hard little laugh.

"Parents are rather to be pitied nowadays," I said.  
"Do you know a one-act comedy by Henri de Saussine  
entitled *Les Petits Pieds?*"

"No," answered Maïa.

"Well, it contains the knot of this question. A member of the Celestial Empire who has been educated in Europe marries a Chinese girl. A little daughter is born and the father's one idea is to spare the child that mutilation of its feet which is the custom in aristocratic circles. He manages to get the child away from its nurse and he confides it to the care of a young Franco-American couple he knows who are just going away on their yacht. They are to take the child to Shanghai, where he is to join them. The vigilant grandmother has kept track of the baby and she goes to the young couple and begs to have it. She explains to them that small feet are the distinctive sign of nobility in China and that if they want to save the child from having its feet mutilated, it will neither have any playfellows, nor later on a husband. She convinces the foreigners of the truth of her statement, takes the baby back and its feet are mutilated. It is just the same with us. Men prefer the old education."

"They are idiots."

"And in the meantime, parents dare not emancipate their daughters, for fear of ruining their future. What is to be done?"

"Let feminine education be completed by some lessons on physiology given by women doctors or by eminent medical men. By making all this stupid mystery of the greatest of Nature's laws, it is as though we are taking upon ourselves to give God a lesson in modesty, seeing that it was He who created this law. It is perfectly grotesque. When girls really know about things,

they will look upon marriage as a sacrament instead of as a mere ceremony. Instead of the ‘unwise virgins’ with no oil in the lamp, men will have ‘wise virgins’ with lighted lamps. For those whom the light inconveniences it may be unpleasant, but that cannot be helped. Ah, if only I could write!”

“Try.”

“No, it is no use trying, I cannot develop my ideas. My professor of literature always used to say that my compositions gave him the impression of having been written with matches.”

“Well, but matches will give light. I am convinced that you have your little note books somewhere.”

Maïa had finished her tea. She leaned back in her arm-chair and said with a provoking smile:

“Who has not at some time or other kept her little note books? I had mine, of course, but I burnt them.”

“Burnt them!” I exclaimed indignantly, “Oh, Maïa, you have not surely.”

“Yes, four years ago, before starting for India.”

“And I am sure that they contained the account of the awakening of one of the ‘Enchanted women of Europe.’”

“An account of her marriage, her divorce and all the rest of it,” she added tantalizingly.

“You are very cruel to make a poor novelist regret them still more.”

“But, Granny, I should never have given you my little note books to read. You might not have cared for me afterwards, for you know that you have a weakness for Monsieur de Couzan.”

“That sounds very much like a confession of your sins. You were to blame, then? I thought so!”

“Thank you,” replied Maïa, with a burst of nervous

laughter. "Monsieur de Couzan was just as much to blame, believe me," she added, a little curtly.

"Well, if I had to find a husband for you and there were twenty men to choose from, he is the one I should choose for you."

"I am very glad that you had nothing to do with it."

"I have often wondered how you could have managed to spoil your life, when you had all the elements of happiness." A wave of emotion coloured my young friend's face and her eyelids quivered under my gaze.

"How?" she repeated, shrugging her shoulders. "There was nothing more easy with our strange education. I will tell you about it all some day, perhaps, but not to-day. Now tell me about your plans. Where are you going when you leave Baden?"

"To the mountains. I have written to several places."

"If you go on the Ouchy side, we shall meet then. I am to spend the Autumn in Savoy with the Bries, only half an hour away from Évian. I could come to see you from there."

"I should be delighted," I said warmly. "But, now," I continued, getting up, "I want to show you our woods."

"This tea under the lime trees with you has been delicious, Granny."

"You must have had an inspiration," I said, "to come to see me."

"You will attribute that to Providence, I suppose?" smiled Maïa.

"Certainly!"

"And why should I have been sent here to-day rather than to-morrow?"

"I do not know that any more than I know why

we should have been put into contact with each other ten years ago. However, without taking into account the very real pleasure that our acquaintance has given me, you have been very useful to me and, without your being aware of the fact, you have served me."

"I have been *useful* to you? I have *served* you?" exclaimed Maïa, colouring with pleasure.

"Yes, you have frequently transmitted certain images and impressions to me which were necessary."

"I am delighted to hear that."

"You would be an excellent person for stimulating me. Have you not noticed how some persons make our thoughts more active and others seem to cripple them?"

"I should just think I have noticed it, but I thought it was just an effect of my own imagination."

"Not at all, I have an American friend who, unfortunately, lives in Rome. When she was in Paris we used to see each other very frequently and spend a great deal of time together. When I was with her, ideas seemed to spring from every cell of my brain and, on returning home, I could always work with the most extraordinary facility. There is nothing supernatural in that. We act on each other constantly and very thoroughly. We know this and we see it all the time, but we do not seem to take it into account. When men of science have penetrated further into the domain of the invisible, they will discover our close relationship. All this is why only Providence can group individuals and bring them into contact with each other."

"After Mother, you are certainly more convinced than any woman I know about the intervention of Providence in the affairs of this world."

"With this difference, that your mother's belief is

entirely subjective and mine is objective. My idea is that the affairs of this world are the affairs of God."

I stopped and pointed to a flower just near. "Look at that grey butterfly spotted with black," I said.

"Yes, I see it," said Maïa.

"Its wings are lined with yellow and the yellow seems to be turned up like a hem on the outside. Should you put that down to hazard?"

"No, certainly not."

"That little yellow hem reveals much more to me than all the dogmas and all the philosophies. If a Thought is guiding the forces which clothe the wild flowers and the butterflies, then it is also guiding the forces that we are."

"Oh, there is evidently a Thought, and an all powerful Thought in the cruel combinations of life, and it is that which makes me so indignant and rebellious."

"And it is just that which consoles me, for this Thought, all powerful as it is, could not have any other end in view than beauty and harmony. When you have any doubts about this, think of the little butterfly with its wings lined and turned back with yellow."

"I shall think of it when I am at my dressmaker's."

"Yes," I said, tranquilly, "everything is bound up together."

Maïa put her arm round my shoulder and we walked slowly along the green avenue, the delicate foliage of which stood out in relief against the golden background of the sky. The soft sound of the water, the gentle flight of the chaffinches and the warblers of all kinds, and the sweet twittering of all the birds, created a harmony around us of which we were instinctively conscious. We lowered our voices and slackened our pace as though to enter into it ourselves. As we came out of

the woods, we heard the Auranne's automobile approaching, and arrived just in time to welcome them. We were introduced and I was congratulated and complimented. We talked for about half an hour on the terrace and then I went with them to their automobile. They got in, and it soon glided away. In a very short time it was a long way off and then quite out of sight, taking away with it a few fragments of my thought and some of my affection.

*Baden.*

The delightful afternoon I spent yesterday had been prepared well in advance. It is just a sample of what I call providential work.

Nearly ten years ago I was at St. Pierre-du-Vauvray and was about to take the train for Paris. As usual the man carrying my bag had to follow me from carriage to carriage, before I found one to my liking. One was too full, another had people in it whose faces did not appeal to me. In one compartment I saw two women alone and, on discovering that they had a fox-terrier, I chose their carriage, so true it is that everything concurs. On getting in, a pair of black eyes, a pair of sea-blue eyes and a pair of brown eyes, the last those of the dog, were turned on me and then turned away again with the most perfect indifference. Nothing amuses me so much as to think over these impressions of a first meeting with people, impressions which make us say afterwards: "Oh, if we had only known!" Yes, but we do not know fortunately.

When the forces of life fling creatures who do not know each other into a somewhat limited space, a sort of shock must take place among the elements of which they are composed. This shock causes a mutual irri-

tion and, thanks to the shock, what was intended to happen, happens. In first-class carriages, people pretend not to see each other. In second-class carriages, inquisitiveness is very frequently not concealed and is sometimes quite embarrassing.

My travelling companions were evidently mother and daughter. The mother was between forty and forty-five. Her brown hair was turning grey; she had beautiful black eyes, very delicate features and a very distinguished look. She was reading prayers from one of those books with mysterious little papers between the leaves, evidently belonging to a pious person.

The daughter was about seventeen. She was wearing a well-made costume of dark blue cloth and a toque of the same material, trimmed with velvet, which suited her profile to perfection. One thick curl of her golden brown hair fell over her shoulder. The purity of line of the upper part of her face, the shadow which her arched eyebrows and her rather high cheeks gave to her sea-blue eyes delighted me.

I admired, as one only can admire when one is old and faded, the bloom of youth which made her skin like velvet. An English novel was open on her lap, but she was looking out at the flying landspace. Presently she turned round and glanced at her mother.

"However can you pray so much?" she said to her in English.

"I have to pray for you as well as for myself," replied the mother in the same language, with a fond but somewhat sad smile. The daughter shrugged her shoulders slightly and looked out of the window again.

I glanced at her with the interest that this little dialogue had aroused in me. In her face I could now see

thoughtfulness and force, and an expression which made her quite different from her mother.

In order not to appear inquisitive, I divided my attention between her and the dog. The animal was soon conscious of my interest. He came and lay down at my side and I stroked his cold, silky ear. His mistress appeared not to notice this. The whole of the journey she was watching the Autumn landscape and I saw that it gave her very real pleasure.

Her mother never even looked at it. When she had finished her devotions, she put her prayer book into an elegant little hand bag and took out a book which evidently contained her visiting list. She studied this carefully, putting a pencil mark here and there. Her daughter watched this and spoke to her again in English.

"While you are about it," she said, "you might as well cross out some of those old cats who get on my nerves."

"The old cats are necessary sometimes," replied her mother, "to keep the young ones in order."

A few minutes later the train reached the Paris station. A footman and a lady's-maid appeared at once for the hand luggage. A tall, fair man, of about fifty years of age, with blue eyes, then came up to the carriage door. The girl's face brightened and, with childish impulsiveness, she flung her arms round his neck and he returned her embrace. I felt sure that this was the father and that she loved her father better than anyone. The husband and wife shook hands, the terrier barked his joy in the wildest way and the little family disappeared in the crowd.

The following summer, I was surprised to meet my travelling companions at a watering-place. They rec-

ognised me at once, but did not appear to have done so. They took their meals at one of the little tables of the hotel restaurant and kept very much to themselves. I discovered that they were the wife and daughter of the well-known banker, Lasserre.

The Lasserres existed in the seventeenth century and had played their part in history quite as much as any of the princes or dukes. I was told that Madame Lasserre was a daughter of the Marquis de Marsan and I happened to know that the Marsan family belonged to the best nobility of Burgundy.

I saw the daughter look at me several times as though she would like to make advances to me. I did not take any notice, fearing that the mother might not approve. In the Park, I discovered some squirrels that had evidently been tamed by one of the visitors and I continued the taming. One morning they were nibbling something I had given them, when suddenly, Pick, Mademoiselle Lasserre's terrier, bounded out from some hiding-place and put them to flight. They escaped up a tree and Pick flung himself like a possessed creature against the foot of the tree. His young mistress, who had witnessed the scene in the distance, came running up and begged my pardon in the name of her dog. It was in this way that the current was established between us.

Her mother then spoke to me and we conversed several times on very ordinary subjects. Underneath her perfect amiability and her society graciousness of manner, I could feel that there was something very rigid. She reminded me of one of those beautiful roses, through the heart of which the sellers fasten a piece of wire. Her wire was religion and I wondered whether she would have held together without that. Her

maternal passion was most touching and pathetic. She felt that her daughter was evolving in another circle, and she was trying to reach her and to keep her hold on her by her own great love.

Her daughter was living her own life very simply, but it was the twentieth-century life. There was great individuality about her, in the very poise of her head, in her gait, in her whole being. She liked strolling about with Pick on the banks of the Rhine. I could very well imagine the strong sympathy that existed between her character and that of the fox terrier. I could not have fancied her with any other kind of dog.

One evening, I invited her to go with me and watch some storks, that lived on an old tower, settle off for the night. The sky was wonderful, with its soft opal tones, and the new moon was just over the huge nest, where the birds, all standing up, were attending to their toilette for the night. I saw that my companion was very much affected by the beauty of the whole scene. I was glad of this and I remembered that at her age I should not even have seen it. Madame de Lasserre had only ten more days to stay when I arrived. Our acquaintance, therefore, was very slight and when she went away, we did not even exchange cards.

The following April, I received a card informing me of the approaching marriage of the young girl with Baron de Couzan. Maia had written at the bottom of the card: "I should be so pleased to see you at my wedding."

On the day in question, therefore, I went to the Church of St. Pierre de Chaillot. I arrived ridiculously early, for I wanted to find a place where I could see the bride and bridegroom, as I was curious to see what kind of companion Providence had assigned to the inde-

pendent young person who had aroused my interest. I promised myself keen pleasure in noting a whole series of fine human emotions.

I was very much disappointed.

In the first place, I had always seen Mademoiselle Lasserre in travelling costumes or in dresses suitable for the country. In her handsome bridal dress, she looked much taller and more elegant, but less natural. There was no sign of any excitement or emotion on her face. She looked as though she were merely present at a ceremony, but did not at all understand its rites. When the fateful ring was put on her finger, I noticed that her eyelids were lowered a minute, and that a smile crossed her lips, but she soon recovered and posed again.

I liked M. de Couzan very much. He was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight, tall and well built, with brown hair and eyes, decided features and a serious looking moustache. The poor moustache had a bad time on the quivering lips, within reach of the nervous teeth, for the bridegroom was deeply affected. I saw him glance at Maïa several times when she was not looking and there was an expression of astonishment on his face. He was trying to realise the fact, no doubt, that this girl, so unapproachable only the day before, was being given to him, that she was about to belong to him. For a well educated man, with delicate feeling, marriage as it is nowadays, presents certain tortures which are not taken into account.

In the vestry, I was amazed, and not at all charmed, at the off-hand way in which the young bride received the customary congratulations. She shook hands with me heartily and thanked me for having come.

As we did not move in the same circle, I did not see

anything more of her, or indeed hear anything more of her, except from time to time in the society notes of the newspaper. About eighteen months later, she suddenly arrived at my hotel with a magnificent bouquet of red roses.

"Forgive me," she said, "I know that my behaviour is worthy of Madame Sans-Gêne. I only discovered yesterday that you were the Pierre de Coulevain to whom I have so often talked in my imagination. I have come now to continue the conversation. I must kiss you first, though, and thank you."

I resigned myself to be kissed and thanked, and then I pointed to the arm-chair, by my writing table, which I keep for my friends. Maïa began to talk to me about herself and her life, and I noticed that she said very little about her husband. It was as though he had only a secondary place in that life. I was surprised at this, having seen what kind of a man he looked. She pressed me to go to her house to tea the following week. I accepted, for the human habitation always interests me very much. To people who know how to read it, it speaks volumes.

I found the house in the Rue Vernet admirably appointed. It contained everything likely to satisfy the requirements of body, mind and soul, but in spite of this it seemed cold to me, so cold in fact that I preferred my one room at the hotel. In a sort of drawing-room, in which a bright wood fire was burning, I saw two arm-chairs, one on each side of the hearth. On the floor, at the side of each chair was a little heap of opened newspapers. This had the most comic effect. On glancing at these heaps I noticed that they were papers which were of an entirely different stamp.

"That's all," said the young wife, taking me back

to her own study. There was a whole world of disillusion, bitterness and anger in the accent with which she uttered those two words.

"All for the present," I said, "but I hope there will be a nursery soon."

"Heaven preserve me from that," she replied. "I have not the bump of maternity. I should not know how to bring up children, nor how to make them happy."

"Does your husband want any?" I asked.

"Very likely he does."

I understood now why the pretty house had seemed so cold to me.

During the rest of the winter, Maïa came to see me often. I was more and more sure after every visit that she was not happy. She was always abusing life, and she was bitter, sceptical and unjust. Something was spoiling her character and I was very sorry to discover this.

We saw nothing of each other during the summer. I returned to Paris in November and, one afternoon without any warning, she suddenly made her appearance again. She was very pale and very nervous.

"Congratulate me," she said, sitting down in her usual place.

"On what?" I asked.

"On my divorce."

I was perfectly stupefied on hearing this, and instantaneously the ceremony in the St. Pierre de Chaillot Church came to my mind.

"You, *divorced!*" I exclaimed, repeating the word slowly, as though to make the idea enter my mind.  
"But were you unhappy?"

"It seems like it. At any rate we were so absolutely

unsuited to each other, Monsieur de Couzan and I, that we simply could not go on living together. One of the surprises of marriage," she added with a half smile.

"Your parents must be greatly upset," I said.

"Yes, of course, I am sorry about it on their account."

"It has all been arranged very quickly," I remarked.

"Yes, and very decently, too, thanks to a delightful lawyer, who is a past master in the art of untying the conjugal knot. And now, remember I am Madame Maïa Lasserre."

"I will remember," I said, "and I am very sorry about it."

A month later she started on a voyage to India, China and Japan with her uncle and the English governess, who had educated her. It is now four years since her divorce. She still lives in her house in the Rue de Vernet. She lunches with her parents every day and spends the Autumn with them at the Château de Mortin in Normandy. Whilst arranging to be absolutely independent, she is, as it were, still chaperoned by them. She has made a little circle of devoted friends, whose very character is a protection for her. She is an indefatigable collaborator of Dr. Henri Lasserre, her uncle, so that her life is very full and her time well spent. Thanks to her irreproachable character and her dignity, she has been able to keep all inquisitive people and gossipers at bay. Her reputation is so good that a great deal of liberty is accorded her and she has the good sense not to take too much advantage of this.

Men say that she has no temperament and that thought consoles them. Women say she has no heart and that verdict makes them less envious.

The question is whether Maïa, without temperament and without heart, is happy? I very much doubt it.

At first she seemed to enjoy her regained liberty and independence. She came back from her long voyage with her mind full of new ideas and her very soul vibrating with all the impressions she had received. It seemed as though she had discovered the source of true happiness.

Gradually her exultation diminished and then disappeared altogether. Whatever may be said to the contrary, divorce is a failure and the world does not care for those who fail. If, when a man has just been admiring a woman, he is told that she is divorced, his expression changes and it is very evident that he feels a kind of instinctive distrust. I have observed this a score of times.

In France, in our old aristocracy, with its orthodox religion, a woman who has been unfaithful to her husband would be accepted more readily than a divorced woman. The former has only broken the laws of honour, the latter has broken the laws of the Church, and that is inexcusable.

In a certain set of the Faubourg St. Germain, Maïa Lasserre is only received now out of consideration for her mother, and by virtue of the financial power of her father. She is quite aware of this, and she only goes to such houses out of bravado just because she takes a mischievous kind of pleasure in obliging these people to accept the fact of her divorce.

She has not lost her place therefore in society, but she lives rather outside it all the same. A hundred little things must make her realise her false position all the time, and, unless I am very much mistaken, she is beginning to feel this rather acutely.

The last two winters, she has been to see me a great deal. She calls me "Granny," and the very name seems to link us together in a sort of motherly and daughterly way. She comes either very early in the afternoon or very late, when she knows she will find me alone.

When she arrives, in her pretty rustling dress, she always has her hands full of flowers, which she insists on laying down on my scribblings. She then sinks down into the arm-chair near my writing table with a sigh of satisfaction and relief. I wipe my pen and we begin to talk.

She tells me what she has been doing all day, describes her voyages of discovery in the zones of misery, and gives me details of her rescue work. We discuss all kinds of subjects. There is a fund of youthfulness and gaiety about her that makes her very droll and very amusing. She always seems to put herself outside anything. When she speaks of love or of maternity it is always as though she, on account of her age, were quite beyond the pale of such phenomena.

For some time past, I have felt that, under some influence or another, her nature was undergoing some transformation. There is less assurance about her expression, and at times there is a sorrowful look in her eyes. Around her nose and at the corners of her mouth, there is not exactly a wrinkle forming, but what artists call a value, and it is this value which gives to her face its pretty seriousness. Her daily contact with unhappy people is creating within her a certain pessimism, which she encourages with a sort of obstinacy.

I was making fun, one day this winter, of the childish way in which she accuses God of injustice on every possible and impossible occasion.

"But God is threatening us all the time."

The very idea of the Eternal God, the very centre of light, the Soul of the Universe, threatening His creatures, the insignificant inhabitants of this Earth, and among them this pretty woman standing there with her hands in her muff, struck me as being so absurd, that I began to laugh heartily, and Maïa very soon joined in my laughter.

"What am I to do?" she said, shrugging her shoulders. "I must blame somebody for all the horrible things that happen."

I wondered what horrible thing was now happening and whether she had fallen in love again. I should not have been surprised, for there were days when she had a look of being ashamed, humiliated and furious, like a person caught in a trap.

She has promised her mother not to marry again and I am sure she will keep her promise, cost what it may; so that a real love affair would certainly be a terrible thing for her in this situation.

Yesterday she alluded to her divorce and her spoilt life for the first time, and I felt she wanted to confide in someone.

One of these days she will make her confession and I shall not have lost anything by the delay. At present, she is quite capable of thoroughly examining her conscience and that is one of the most difficult things to do.

I am all the more curious and interested, as I made the acquaintance of Baron de Couzan last summer. I was spending a week at the house of one of my readers with whom I had been corresponding for some time, and he happened to be visiting there, too. I had only seen him twice since the day of his marriage.

The first time he shook hands with me I liked him.

He has a cordial, frank way of shaking hands and we soon became firm friends.

He belongs to an old family of Savoy, that has never become Piedmontese, and he has kept all the characteristics of his race. He is a true son of the mountains, robust, well-built, keenly intelligent, persistent and proud.

Thanks, no doubt, to his atavism, he has a way of holding his head like those who have always had high peaks before them. He has thick, brown hair, his moustache is not silky, his nostrils seem to breathe in freely, his chin and his underlip protrude slightly. His Savoy blood and the fresh air have given a pinky bronze tone to his complexion such as an Englishman might envy.

All this force is softened by the kindly expression of his brown eyes and the refinement of his smile.

I tried to imagine the cause which prevented these two young people getting on with each other, and it was quite beyond me. It seems to me quite possible that for some unknown cause their strong wills may have come into contact, and that each of them may have refused to give way.

I do not fancy that Pierre de Couzan would be the ideal of a romantic or morbidly imaginative girl, and such a girl would certainly not be his ideal. He would be incapable of saying empty, sentimental things, but I imagine that his caress would be eloquent.

He was educated by his widowed mother and by the Jesuits. This dual influence has given certain shades to his mind without spiritualising it. He is not religious, but his ancestors were, and their belief has left its traces in him. I like meeting with such traces in the modern mind, as its crudeness is softened by them

Baron de Couzan is neither a great thinker nor yet a philosopher. I rather think that he has not much respect for books, but during the long walks we took together, I noticed that he reads the Book of Nature, and that he stops at the right places.

Besides this, I found that he has great talent for drawing. With a few strokes of the pen, he can give the psychology of a scene and the characteristic expression of an individual. What elements of enjoyment there are in that!

M. de Couzan knows of my intimacy with Maïa. He has only once alluded to the past.

"When I married," he said, "I thought I understood women. I had never imagined what a girl might or might not be. My ignorance cost me a great deal, but I do not regret it. After my divorce, I went to Liège to finish my studies as an electrical engineer. I had given these up on the death of my eldest brother. At the end of two years, I had passed my examination. I then went to work in the factories like an ordinary working man. I lived, worked, slept and ate just as the workmen do, and all that gave me the most valuable experience.

"After that I became a partner in an automobile factory, and I have found a field of work which suits me admirably. If it had not been for the little adventure with which you are acquainted, I should just have sunk into an easy going, comfortable life and, like all idlers, I should have become merely a fat animal. Plenty of activity keeps me in form, morally and physically. I hope the divorce may be as profitable to Madame Maia Lasserre as it has been to me," he added, somewhat ironically.

In spite of the satisfaction he expressed, I could feel

the latent trouble that he endeavoured to hide. He was sometimes absorbed by it, and then his expression was hard and he would twist his moustache violently. I fancied that this trouble had caused the two vertical lines between his eyebrows.

Monsieur de Couzan and I have remained friends. He frequently sends me flowers and he never leaves Paris without coming to see me. He always sits down in Maïa's arm-chair and I cannot help feeling nervous during his visits. I have a dread, and at the same time a great wish, that my young friend should suddenly appear and I am listening for her arrival all the time.

My loyalty to both of them prevents my arranging such a meeting, but I would give a great deal to witness it. Their expression would help me to understand their respective feelings much better than all their words, and I should like to know more — and my readers too, I hope.

#### *Baden.*

I have seen the ears and the head of my brother, the Earth-dweller, for the first time. It certainly was not any too early, as I might have left this world without seeing them, if I had delayed much longer. The majority of people will do so, I know, but it is always agreeable to be an exception to the general rule.

I spent the day at Zurich yesterday. Whilst lunching at the Restaurant Bauer, near the lake, I suddenly noticed a pair of flat, red ears, which stood out from a bald head that belonged to my neighbour at the next table.

I could only see the man's back, but these ears gave me a veritable shock. I generally notice pretty ears and frequently criticise ugly ones, and I always ob-

serve the expression they give to a face. Hitherto, in my superficial observations, I had always considered ears as an ornament rather than an organ. But in the present instance they seemed to me like two receivers, placed at the right and left side of the head, giving to this the look of a box.

Yes, the head was absolutely like a box, made of bones covered with a hairy skin, and, I added to myself, not always hairy even.

The box, I now discovered was ovoid, and at this discovery I almost uttered an exclamation. A man's head, then, is egg-shaped, and an egg contains the germ of future life. What a magnificent and consoling symbol! Strange that I should never have noticed this before!

I then looked round the room. There were three pretty women present and there were some Anglo-Saxons, Germans, Latin and Slavs. They were all, of course, occupied in the same way. Delicate or coarse hands, be-ringed or not, they were all supplied with a fork with which they picked up the pieces off their plates and put them into what we call the mouth.

This gesture, repeated over and over again, almost automatically, gave them all the appearance of self-feeding machines. When these creatures had serviettes under their chins and tooth-picks between their lips, they were simply grotesque.

To think that the same mouth which talks, sings, smiles, kisses, takes communion, also takes food!

It seemed horrible, and it occurred to me that I should have given two mouths to everyone. The idea of two mouths to one face caused me a fit of hilarity.

Whenever, in my imagination, I have wanted to

modify one of Nature's works, or some destiny, I have always made it worse.

What rough and imperfect machines these human bodies are!

As a naturalist, I could see all our inferiority, and I shuddered with disgust.

Almost instantaneously my thoughts took another turn and I then saw something of our grandeur.

With my eyes fixed on my neighbour's cranium, I realised that within it there was a mass of nervous substance which would make me sick, if I could see it, but which was an accumulator of incredible force, a register of sensibility so delicate that it is impossible for us to even imagine it, and that its cells are all the time accomplishing operations which we reproduce, at present, by means of the kodak, the phonograph and the cinematograph. In a rapid vision, some of those marvels appeared to me which have been created by that instrument which is both human and divine: immense cities, beautiful cathedrals, master-pieces of art and gigantic engineering works.

I said to myself that words uttered by this transmitter could go the round of the planet in three hours and a half.

I said to myself, too, that the living cells of this brain elaborate and weave the human soul and give out its radiant substance and that this soul atom is part of the plan of the Universe. From that moment, man was glorified in my eyes.

I looked round again and I saw some well-cut features, silky hair, and delicate skin, and the mouth, the terrible mouth, with its curved and coloured lips. In the act of alimentation, it was communicating with Nature.

Providence is doing its best to soften and embellish, and there is plenty of scope for this, Heaven knows, but still we are its work.

The owner of this cranium, which had caused me such a curious meditation, rose just at this moment. I watched him, and felt as though I could not take my eyes off him. Whilst he had been masticating his food, and without being at all aware of it, he had created quite an ebullition of thought. He had set in motion the brain of a person whom he had not even seen.

Is not all that wonderful?

My meditation had prepared me for a visit that I paid after luncheon to the Zurich Historical Museum.

I saw there the various relics which reveal to us the evolution of our planet. Everything is scientifically arranged, all the instruments of stone and iron, the tools and the different utensils fashioned by primitive hands, then the works of hands that were more and more skilful.

All these things showed the slow progress of man. All these things revealed a plan that had been traced and inevitably followed.

The picture that I had brought away with me in my mind of that luncheon in the Restaurant Baüer stood out very distinctly, as I gazed at these wrecks of a far-back past. I said to myself that this luncheon was not a twentieth-century meal, as I had thought, but perhaps of the ten millionth century, and the ever profane *ego* within me, added: "And to think that the Earth-dweller still has his serviette fastened under his chin!"

On leaving the Museum, I went through the principal streets of the town. The setting sun flooded them with warm light, and they were full of a joyous, well-fed, gaily dressed crowd.

Zurich gives one the impression of wealth and of proud wealth. Its financial establishments and its com-mercial houses are veritable palaces. The native of Zurich is essentially "glorious" as the peasants say. At Basle, it seems as though there must be money, but here one sees it.

Just as I was thinking this, I came to a standstill in the middle of the foot-path. I had suddenly remembered that the principal agent of this prosperity was a little worm—the silkworm. Yes, and like us, it fancied it was spinning for itself and all the time it was spinning for Life. There was a little of its sub-stance in all these buildings, in all these comfortable human dwellings. "Everything works together."

All the way back from Zurich to Baden, I thought over my impressions, and it seemed to me that they were well worth thinking over. I had looked at man quite objectively, that is as an Earth-dweller. His ears and his head will never again be to me what they were. They were only words to me before and now they are something more.

Humanity will, no doubt, experience a shock like the one I experienced. The cycle of its childish dream has been lived. During this dream, it has imagined every-thing, God, Heaven, its beginning and its end. It has even imagined itself. It is now on the threshold of its youth. Thanks to the discoveries of Science it will come into contact with Truth. The contact will be painful to it I feel sure, but in Truth, it will find its veritable greatness.

In the meantime, I fancy it is more profitable to meditate about a living cranium than about a dead head.



**II**

**ST. GERVAIS**



## II

### *St. Gervais.*

I was ordered to St. Gervais for what the Germans call the *Nach Kur*, literally the "after cure." They attach a great deal of importance to this, and they are quite right. All things had combined to make me wish to visit this place. I am amazed at the care with which Providence not only directs, but prepares the movements of the atoms that we are.

At Baden, a young Swiss had been introduced to me and we had talked a little together. He gave me a book entitled *Les Lettres et Voyages de M. César de Saussure*, the preface to which had been written by his father. It was a very fine book and the author's name made me think of Horace Bénédict de Saussure, the geologist, and then naturally of Mont Blanc, which he *discovered*.

In the hotel library I came upon a book which was no other than the story of the King of the Alps, by Charles Durier. I read it with great delight and was at once attracted by Mont Blanc and wanted very much to see it again. I could not help thinking with regret of my agility of former days and I grumbled and groaned at rheumatism and old age. The length of the journey and the crowd of tourists which make everything so difficult rather alarmed me and I was about to change my mind and go to Axenstein.

Fortunately, I received a letter from an American woman I knew. She had just finished reading my last book and wrote to thank me for it. This was the sec-

ond summer that she and her husband had spent at St. Gervais and she spoke enthusiastically about it and begged me to join them there.

She sent me a post card representing the village at the foot of a chain of Mont Blanc and underneath she had written: "Does not this tempt you?" It tempted me so much that the following week I started to go and see it myself.

From Geneva to Fayet I had the compartment to myself. Thanks to the slowness of the train, everything was reflected within me, the gay plain, the steep mountains, the wild scenery and the play of light of the setting sun.

On passing through the valley of Sallanches, I was struck and perfectly fascinated by the tragic beauty of the shadows and the whiteness of the distant Alps. There was no life at all around the low-roofed, brown houses, not even a flower, not a voice to be heard, not the sound of a bell. The cold, grey Arve was flowing along through the green meadows. It did not seem to have the least idea that the blue Rhone was waiting for it.

Just as I was wondering whether it would be possible for there to be human joy there, a flight of crows started from a cluster of great bare rocks, and this flight, striping the milky sky, completed the harmony of the picture by a master stroke.

At the Fayet station, I found Mr. B—— waiting for me with a carriage with rubber tires.

The darkness had come on, but it was one of those summer nights which had stored up some of the sunbeams of the day.

For three quarters of an hour, we drove slowly uphill. The air seemed to get lighter and lighter, and

more and more fragrant. The lights of Fayet grew smaller and smaller, and the stars larger. I had the sensation that I was going up to something very beautiful and very good.

I was not disappointed, for when once I had arrived, I found beauty, friendship and music.

The sun, sky and mountains provided me with beauty from morning to night. Mr. and Mrs. B—— who had hitherto been mere acquaintances soon became my friends. They were most attentive and kind in every way.

They continued to provide the rubber tires. We take our meals at the same table, we play bridge together and the most delightful intimacy has sprung up between us. Added to all this I have music at St. Gervais and for me to mention this fact appeals to my sense of humour.

All my life long I have detested music. The only pleasure it has ever given me has been — when it ceased. I have very little ear for it, so that whenever I listen I have always had to shut my eyes, otherwise I should not hear it at all. The piano used to be the torture of my childhood and girlhood, and pianists, including Rubinstein and Liszt, were my *bêtes noires*.

But lately, since I have begun to write, I have felt the need of sounds. I have guessed that sounds must be the psychical language, *par excellence*, and I have begun to realise that a whole world of sensations and of subtle enjoyment has been closed to me.

One day this Spring, when I was at my writing table, I heard a whole series of scales being played in the apartment over mine. I listened a moment with my pen in the air and then I flung it down on the table, exclaiming: "Idiot!"

The epithet was applied to myself and quite rightly too.

For the first time in my life, I had understood scales, I had understood that they are one of the masterpieces of Divine mathematics, one of the bases of Creation. I listened now, perfectly delighted and fascinated. Only the hand of a master could have given every detail of the admirable progression in this way.

I discovered that my neighbour was G——, the celebrated Russian pianist. For the following month, without having any idea of what he was doing, he developed my musical comprehension. I had no idea what he was playing. I was much too ignorant to know that, and besides it did not much matter. It was something human and it appealed to me. Every morning, he repeated a certain study, the waves of which seemed to scatter bright fragments through my room. I was very much grieved the day that there was silence overhead.

The morning after my arrival at St. Gervais, I was breakfasting with my window open. Suddenly, together with the fresh morning air and the rays of the rising sun, came the gay notes of the famous study that I never expected to hear again.

I cannot describe my surprise and pleasure. My room was in the new part of the hotel, facing the suite of rooms occupied by my friends. This was Mr. B——'s morning greeting.

I had frequently heard people speak of his talent as a pianist, but I had never imagined that he was so wonderful. When he plays one never thinks of art, technique nor instrument. His piano, which was brought on an automobile from Geneva, is always open and seems to be a continuation of himself, as it attracts

him irresistibly. He sits down whenever the inspiration comes to him, and, under the touch of his delicate artistic hands, waves and waves of harmony full of feeling and words are heard. Every morning, he wishes me "Good Morning" by playing my favourite study. I learnt that it was by Kulak and that it is called *From Flower to Flower*.

It is thanks then to Mr. B—— that a few rays from the soul of Beethoven and of Chopin have reached me. I do not think that my ear for music is any more keen, but simply that I listen to the music now with my mind.

I cannot tell whether the beauty, the friendship, the music and the air are all acting on my organism, but I walk and I even climb. I cannot believe my legs.

At a certain age in life, when our limbs and mind get lazy, we ought to get trainers gifted with plenty of magnetism. Mr. and Mrs. B—— have been mine, for, from the very first day, I went with them everywhere and did not feel tired.

St. Gervais is adorable. It has green slopes, fruit trees, mountains covered with pine trees or snow, and an Italian sky. It has mountains that the light clothes in grey, light brown or blue, and that sometimes look quite vaporous or *duftig*, as the Germans say. The air and the atmosphere are of an almost visible purity.

Italian architects and builders are now making it much less beautiful by putting suburban villas in the midst of this Alpine scenery. On the Prarion there is one Swiss chalet built of pine-wood. With its wide windows and open verandahs, it looks all eyes, and this is as it should be in such a nook of beauty. The St. Gervais Square is charming, with its Church surrounded by the cemetery, its old fountain and ancient houses.

Unfortunately automobiles come there now by the dozen. Instances of parsimony are seen here which amaze foreigners. Electricity scarcely costs anything, so that without being ruined, people might very well have floods of light. Instead of this each lamp looks like a candle wick, and the effect of such lighting along the road is most comic.

The individuality of St. Gervais, if I may thus express it, is the dome of the Miage, one of Mont Blanc's children. It possesses the magnetism of all great forces. Everyone gazes at it, seems to question it and gets curiously attached to it, rejoices when it is well lighted up and regrets to see the light gradually leaving it.

My friends knew a place from which it is particularly beautiful at sunset. Just as we were starting, Mr. B—— presented me, in the most innocent way possible, with a pretty Alpine-stock. The colour came into my face with pleasure at the very idea of it. No compliment could have delighted me as much. Oh, vanity, vanity!

I must own though, that I was rather alarmed lest the ascent should be too difficult for me. We drove uphill and then walked for about three quarters of an hour along paths all strewn with pine cones and so slippery that the Alpine-stock was quite justified.

When we arrived in front of the Mont Blanc of St. Gervais, some light clouds hid the top from view. My friends, who were acting as the impressarii of this wonderful sight, assured me, with all the fine assurance of true Americans, that the clouds would disperse.

A faint evening breeze soon rose, freed the mountain top, leaving it in all its whiteness to the fire of the setting sun. This touched it at first very timidly, grad-

ually made it begin to glow and then simply covered it with gold and flames, as though it wanted to melt all its snow. The glow arrived at its maximum of intensity and we were very glad to have arrived in time for this. Very gradually, and almost imperceptibly, the light began to decrease. The effect of this was admirable. To the right, certain bare parts of the rock, separated by a ravine, looked like two great antediluvian animals with their backs turned towards us. The gold and the flame gradually died away and blue and green took their place. The tragic effect of this blue and green on the white surface was most striking. The blue and green, in their turn, disappeared and, for a few minutes, there was infinite desolation.

Nature had just given us one of its rarest and most beautiful symphonies, a symphony in which it had put passion, desertion, despair, death — a whole crowd of things which only sounds could describe. We were all three of us most deeply impressed and, on getting up, we continued our way in silence.

The air was fragrant with the fresh hay and the thyme on which we were walking. The cow bells tinkled prettily in the tranquil atmosphere. At a certain spot, we turned round again and saw that the dome of the Miage had recovered its whiteness and its serenity. What are the forces which create and conduct these morning and evening symphonies? What place do those forces occupy in the divine hierarchy? I have no conception what they may be, but I feel that they are living. For whom is this splendour that so few of the Earth-dwellers see? It is no doubt all intended for that concert of beauty of the whole Universe, which mankind will perhaps hear some day.

*St. Gervais.*

We did not want to leave Savoy without going to pay our homage to Mont Blanc. We accordingly made that pilgrimage yesterday and I hope that the impressions I received may not be effaced for a long time. I had seen and admired it when I was young, and now that I am old I have *felt* it. There are moments when it seems to me that old age has its advantages.

The weather and the atmosphere seemed specially prepared for us to have the maximum of beauty. We took the little P. L. M. railway from Fayet, and electricity, that force which has been so triumphantly captured, took us to the Giant's feet. We went up slowly, just as though we were going towards a god and the head of this god was all brilliant with light. The crevasses and the bare, ugly rocks at its base disappeared under a golden mist. Above the bluish depths of the passes and the valley, the wires, charged with invisible human thought, were sparkling in the sunshine. To the right, along what used to be the old road, there were automobiles going up at the same time. Our admiration was beyond all words and our eyes filled with tears of emotion. Mine rolled down my cheeks and I did not even attempt to stop them or to wipe them away.

We continued to the end of the line, and came back by Chamonix. We saw the weird peaks, the moving glaciers, the beautiful sea-green *séracs* and — Mont Blanc itself!

It is certainly the king of the chain, not so much on account of its height, as that can scarcely be judged, but for its broad, powerful lines. They give a sort of majesty to it and it looks like an ancestor. One feels as though it is someone and one loves it. On seeing it from Chamonix, we were terribly disappointed.

From there one is simply oppressed by its huge mass.

The statue which Chamonix, in its gratitude, has put up to the memory of Horace Bénédict de Saussure, the naturalist who discovered Mont Blanc, gave me great pleasure. It is a block of granite, representing two figures: a guide, a native of the place, pointing to the giant mountain and showing it to Monsieur de Saussure. The guide's attitude reveals a curiosity that is both enthusiastic and naïfe. He has his hat on, for he does not know. The geologist is gazing at the mountain, his face lighted up with admiration, his whole attitude expressing his surprise and respect mingled with awe. His hat is off, for he knows. It is a very living group, the conception of which is harmonious and there is a fine psychology about it.

For centuries and centuries, in the centre of Europe, right in the temperate zone, there had been a Mont Blanc, the summit of which had glittered in the morning and evening sun, and a sea of ice. No one had seen them, though. Thousands of people before Horace Bénédict de Saussure had touched the rock, but he had been the first to feel it, and, as Charles Durier says, "he experienced an indescribable sensation when he came into contact with the framework of the globe."

This was one of those short circuits with which we are well acquainted nowadays, and, by its gleam, the naturalist saw Mont Blanc. It almost seems as though man were born mentally blind. The scales only fall from his eyes one by one, at long intervals at first, and later on at shorter intervals. In spite of this, after all these ages, he is still almost totally blind. Not until the seventeenth century of our era, and we cannot tell in what century after the Creation, did the Earth-

dweller see the mountain, the mountain which had emerged from the liquid plain long before the birth of his race, and which is one of the beauties of this planet.

Nature has modelled the summits of the mountain, hollowed out its sides and made reservoirs for maintaining and alimenting Life. When man first saw the mountain, another scale had fallen from his eyes. From that time forth it has attracted him irresistibly. With one of those efforts, which always makes him so much greater, he strained every nerve to fight against the forces of the precipice and against the elements. He perished in his attempt, but not until he had cut out steps on which others could put their feet.

He commenced his conquest with his two feet and a stick. He has continued it by means of steam power and electricity. Now as an aerostat, he can soar like an eagle over the peaks. We should have to be very obstinate and very much prejudiced if we did not see Divine genius in all this.

The mountain is one of man's finest conquests. It revives him, purifies and heals him. He needed its virgin forces, its oxygen, its snows. Ah, how much he needed all this! Mother Nature gave it to him at the right moment and she alone knows the right moment for everything.

With some excellent field glasses, I was able to watch some people climbing up Mont Blanc for a few minutes. The four people looked like penguins against the white surface of the mountain. I was perfectly fascinated by them. My thoughts and my heart were so much with them that I seemed to be sharing their efforts and their danger. They were fastened together by a rope, and I noticed that they planted their sticks in such a

way as to form a right angle and give them a safe balance.

I wondered why these people were risking their lives in that way. Some force, lodged in that famous ovoid box, was urging them on, obliging them to stride over yawning crevasses and to walk on the edge of precipices.

Was this force vanity, ambition, love of science or the attraction of the unknown? I could not see this force, but I realised that it was governing these human bodies.

The idea of being led along by the Invisibles! Yes, and all of us are, as long as we live. It is awe-inspiring and at the same time consoling!

On our way back to Fayet, I admired the construction of the electric railway. It gave me an impression of strength, balance and, above all, of a certain precision which is a proof of immense progress. How many scales must have fallen from the eyes of the Earth-dweller for him to have been able to produce such a piece of work? And these scales never fall from the eyes without causing pain.

Michelet says in one of his works: "The seventeenth century saw Versailles. Poor seventeenth century! The eighteenth century saw the Earth."

I would add: "The nineteenth century saw Humanity." Which century will see Life? Which century will see God?

I wonder!



**III**

**LAUSANNE**



### III

*Lausanne.*

THE end of people and of things always arrives, I fancy, after a cleverly combined diminution of forces, prepared for us without our knowing it.

The end of the St. Gervais season came. People kept going away and, every day, the pretty little Square around the Church, the roads and even the Prarion became more and more silent, and this silence affected us.

Ah, in spite of his insect-like proportions, his ugliness and his pettiness, man holds a certain place in Nature. His radiating soul produces the invisible, and that invisible creates, peoples, and warms. We had been imagining that we should like to plant our tent at the foot of these beautiful Alps and that it would be very difficult for us to leave them and now, gradually, we began to look towards the plain. The admiration and the affection that we had felt, thanks to the mountains, had been lived and nothing could now re-animate those feelings.

It is like this with certain loves, passions and enthusiasms, and indeed with all the sentiments which are the flowers of Life. Sentiments which are the fruits, such as friendship, are the only ones to endure to the end.

We, in our turn, went away and without feeling that great grief which we had expected to feel. We were even rather glad to find once more, on arriving at the Hotel Beau Rivage of Geneva, the luxury and the people to which one is accustomed in large hotels.

During dinner I felt my duality in a curious way.

The "other one" felt almost pained by this restaurant picture, with people dressed up in evening uniform, women all decked out in their finery, and floods of electric light. It all seemed horribly vulgar and jimcrack compared with the other place where the air was so pure, the stars so big and so friendly and where the dome of the Miage flung its whiteness over everything in the night. As to me, my nebulous self, I honestly rejoiced in the well-prepared and well-served meal. I was glad to see elegant American women and to hear a little society chatter again, and yet it seemed as though "the other one" and I myself were one.

We only spent four days at Geneva. My friends left me at Lausanne and went on themselves to Greece, through the Engadine and Italy.

#### *Lausanne.*

I had intended taking up my winter abode at Ouchy, where I had not stayed for several years. I could not get a single room there and it was rather against my inclination that I put up at Lausanne.

I had never visited this place, except between two trains or two funiculars. That is the way in which we are so unfair to a place. Its steep streets, which in those days had not been enlivened by the little trams, and its bare Cathedral had left an impression on my mind of something hard and dry.

I now retract. I am spending the rest of my life making such retractions and am very glad to do so. It is no slight satisfaction to feel that although age may cause the physical vision to be less keen, it increases the keenness of the mental vision. This superior capacity of seeing with the mind can perhaps be acquired by everyone who manages to keep up the activity of his

thought. Providence had obliged me to do this, by means which were not at all in accordance with my tastes. I had jibbed more than once, but the result has been a recompense and a compensation.

At present, all the places inhabited by the Earth-dwellers seem interesting and even wonderful to me. I do not only see their cells, those stone cubes, with openings pierced in them, that we call houses, palaces or public buildings, and those edifices surmounted with domes or steeples that we call churches or temples, but I see the immaterial work that comes out of all these places and which has come out of them in the past. They appear to me as centres of life, nourished and constantly renewed by Divine and human forces.

It seems to me that each one has a destiny, which will become a synthesis, that each one has a soul and an expression. I realise that the generations which have passed away are still working for that synthesis, for that soul, for that expression. I recognise their traces and I feel their presence and in this I find the proof of the survival of man. At the stage at which I have now arrived, that proof is decidedly agreeable.

The very situation of Lausanne makes one guess that it has had an interesting past and that, among towns, it counts as an important one.

On three hills, on the sides of two ravines, are some groups of houses, one above another, an old fortified castle with towers and a draw-bridge, a cathedral towering above all the rest, some buildings, churches, clusters of trees, terraces with flowers and the arches of a bridge.

From afar, it looks as though all this were linked together, as though it were all quite close and went on for ever. It gives one the idea that the inhabitants must have wings and that they go in and out of the

buildings by the windows. All this is to be seen bathed in sunshine, stretching out from the heights of a very green forest to the edge of a very blue lake.

And this picturesque place was the old Lausonium ; a little Celtic city, governed by the Druids. It was afterwards a Christian, Imperial and Episcopal city governed by Bishops and then a conquered and reformed city governed by the Berne Bailiffs. It has been under the yoke of the House of Savoy and under the protection of France. At present, it is the capital of the Canton of Vaud, a democratic town administered by a Syndic and Municipal Councillors. It is a free town and is both prosperous and happy.

How many centuries have gone by from the time it first became a town until now ! What a fine epic poem all this would make, and this epic poem has been one long frantic struggle for liberty.

The struggle has all of it taken place on the three hills : on the Bourg hill, where the aristocracy took up its quarters ; on the City hill, which I call its sacred hill, as the Cathedral was built there, so that it became the centre of its religion ; and then the Palud, which is also a part of the City, the part where the people lived and where the trade was. These various groups no longer exist, but the spirit of the groups exists and all this helps us in the comprehension of the past.

The idea of Lausanne as an Imperial and Episcopal City is curious. I can scarcely conceive of such a thing. Its Bishops were very high and mighty *seigneurs*. They were Counts of Vaud, Princes of the Empire and the money bore their effigy. It appears they professed to hold the sovereignty of the Vaud country from the Virgin herself, whose Administrators they held themselves to be. This is written in Latin in the Act by

which the assembled inhabitants of Lausanne recognised their rights.

The sixteenth Bishop founded the Cathedral. The fortified Castle of St. Maire was built to serve as the Episcopal Residence. Lausanne then had an all powerful Chapter of Canons, the Municipal Councillors of that epoch, convents, monasteries and all the important accessories of the Catholic worship. It even became a centre for pilgrimages.

In spite of this, or perhaps because of this, its manners and customs gradually became deplorable. There were all kinds of rivalries and feuds, and the country was devastated by battles and fights. The Virgin was no doubt displeased with her Administrators, for she handed over the department of Vaud, which had been her gift, to the Bernese heretics. This was the worst punishment possible. The Episcopal insignia disappeared for ever from the Château of St. Maire and that was the end of one epoch.

The Catholic battalion had given all this and the Calvinistic battalion now took its place. Under the very roof of the Cathedral, which had been built by the Catholics, the celebrated controversy took place, the "Disputation of Lausanne," which lasted seven days and resulted in the separation of Vaud from the Romish Church.

The irony of the gods is seen in religious affairs, just as in political ones. The Reform, when definitely established, was a reaction against the dissoluteness of the epoch and against the bondage and narrowness of human reason. It has always been thus everywhere.

On the City hill, the Bernese built an Academy, which became the centre of the Reform movement. Noble minded, thoughtful men were able to give utterance to

their ideas there. Minds liberated from dogma were able to turn to study and to scientific research and the manner of living became more austere.

The Bernese domination was hard for the Vaudois people, whose phlegmatic temperament was not in accordance with the sanguine temperament of their lords and masters. The natural gaiety of the Vaudois and their love of chaff seemed to be stifled under the Puritanical constraint they had to endure. France then came, like a beautiful ray of sunshine, and dispersed some of the grey mist which was hanging round the city of the three hills.

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and later on the Revolution, brought swarms of French people there and with them came new forces that were profitable to trade and industry. With them, too, came the philosophical spirit and the art of talking and of elegant manners. Lausanne became an intellectual centre and the Bourg neighbourhood a sort of Faubourg St. Germain. It had its *salons* in which Voltaire, the Chevalier de Boufflers, Benjamin Constant, Madame de Staël, Madame de Montolieu, Madame de Charrière and many others appeared. These brilliant intellects, at the same time deep and frivolous, created a current which fought against the Bernese influence and prepared the emancipation of the country. This current of French thought can still be felt. Lausanne, therefore, has been emancipated twice over. It has continued, without any interruption and without wavering, its intellectual and scientific ascension. The majority of people think of it as a town where there are specialists for all ailments, where surgeons operate at moderate prices, where there are cheap pensions, plenty of hotels, institutions for young men and boarding schools for girls.

There is all this and more besides. In olden times there were saints that worked cures. After that there were whole dynasties of doctors and surgeons who were expected to perform miracles. These miracles are expected now-a-days, for people come from all parts of the world to be treated, operated and generally patched up. In no other place are there so many *cliniques* and nowhere is the surgeon's knife so active. Lausanne has a splendid intellectual and scientific outfit. It has schools for all the arts and for all the trades, colleges which are excellent, a University to which people come from all parts of the world, newspapers which hold high rank in the press, philanthropical institutions which alone would do it honour and a fine hospital belonging to the Canton. It has a theatre and a public for the best *artistes* and an orchestra for interpreting the works of the masters. It finds money for putting up statues to its great men. It has some very beautiful pictures in its National Museum and it is now building a Conservatory for Music. I do not know any town in France, or indeed anywhere else, containing sixty thousand or even two hundred thousand inhabitants, capable of such effort. It does not make this effort without grumbling a little, but all the same it does make it.

It must be owned that Lausanne is singularly favoured by Nature. Its situation is unique and its altitude ideal. Waves of beauty and force come to it from the mountains and the lake. Its air is light and keen, its sunlight soft and exhilarating, its streets are full of young people, its moral and physical atmosphere is as pure as possible. All this contributes to make of Lausanne a healer and an educator and that was, perhaps, its mission on earth.

The synthesis that it has lived through and that it is

now continuing appears to me very plainly. Under its beautiful beech trees, I can see the Druids' altar. Lower down, on its sacred hill the ex-Notre-Dame — the Catholic altar — the Bernese Academy — a pulpit — then the Runime Palace, the modern University, a centre of learning. First then, came Druidism, with its intuitive philosophy, afterwards Catholicism with its elevated idealism, then Calvinism with its cold reason, and afterwards Science, which is elaborating the new worship and which will, perhaps, bring mankind back to the old oak trees to adore the living God instead of the god Belin. According to my way of thinking, a synthesis like this makes of Lausanne a very great little town.

#### *Lausanne.*

This time it was the Évian boat, and not an automobile, that brought Madame Lasserre here. I went to meet her at the landing stage and it was with keen pleasure that I recognised her elegant outline in the midst of the somewhat ugly crowd of travellers. She was carrying a bouquet of flowers, a real country bouquet.

"Oh, Granny," she exclaimed, shaking hands, "why did you take the trouble to come down to Ouchy, I should soon have been at Lausanne."

"Yes," I replied, "but as you are taking the boat back, I did not want you to waste half your visit in a tram. We will lunch at the Hôtel du Château, out on the terrace. It will be delightful in this beautiful weather."

"Right for the Château, the terrace, anything and everything you like. I am at your service."

"Are the flowers for me?" I asked.

"Of course. I gathered them in the presbytery garden, with the priest's permission. Country flowers must be rare for you and I know you like them."

"Indeed I do," I said, burying my face in the beautiful bunch of lavender, rosemary, mignonette, and geraniums. "How fresh and wholesome they are!" I added.

I took my visitor towards the Quay. It was one of those days when there seems to be an unreal beauty about the lake. Under its calm surface, deep vibrations could be seen, vibrations which betrayed the passage of some steamer, a boat that was now invisible, already far away and, perhaps even, at anchor. Charmed by this beauty, we walked along in silence for some time. Maïa was the first to recover from the fascination.

"Are you comfortable in your hotel?" she asked, with that affectionate pity with which my way of living always inspires her.

"Very comfortable," I answered, smiling. "My hotel is brand new, scarcely finished even yet, and admirably situated. The rooms are very beautiful and furnished in English style. Nothing has been forgotten, for there is a writing table and even a bookshelf. There is plenty of light and air and there are wide corridors. I like it very much, partly perhaps because it is all so young and fresh. Fortunately there are neither any *Combists* nor any *Bourgetists* staying there." Maïa stopped short and opened her beautiful eyes wide.

"*Combists* and *Bourgetists!*" she repeated. "What in the world are they? Religious sects?"

"No," I answered, laughing, "merely the appellation given to the patients of Dr. Combe and Dr. Bourget, two Lausanne specialists for stomach diseases.

Both doctors put their patients on macaroni and rice diet, but one makes them lie down on their backs and the other face downwards."

"Granny, Granny!" exclaimed Maïa, laughing heartily.

"They manage to inspire their patients with the faith of disciples, bordering even on fanaticism, and this is to their credit, for they obtain absolute obedience from them. This Quay, for instance, is 800 yards long, and it serves Dr. Combe as the right distance for the constitutional which he prescribes for his patients. He orders them to walk it once or ten times, just as he judges necessary. Look, there are some specimens of his peripatetics."

We were just meeting some women with greyish and yellow complexions and sad-looking eyes. Some of them were too stout and some too thin. They were all more or less shapeless.

"Poor things!" exclaimed Maïa. "They certainly neither see the lake nor the mountains."

"No, but the lake and the mountains are probably acting on them and that is the essential thing."

"You are always optimistic."

"And look, too, how deliberately and how proudly they are carrying out their master's orders. They seem to be saying: 'You see, I am one of Dr. Combe's patients!'"

"Oh, are you sure of that?"

"Yes, I have lunched in one of the hotels where some Combists are staying and in another where there are Bourgetists. At their respective tables, they religiously partook of the dishes ordered them, in the most solemn and reverential way, as though they were accomplishing a rite. When once the function was over they went

away slowly, but not without looking round to see if we were admiring them. It was very evident that they considered themselves privileged creatures."

"Oh, Granny, this is pure imagination and slander!"

"Imagination and slander, oh, no, I assure you it is not. Vanity is to be found everywhere and it is very often a consolation. It appears that the Combists and the Bourgetists never talk of anything but their ailments."

"Well, that ought to be forbidden."

"Yes, it certainly ought. They buttonhole their acquaintances on every possible occasion and give them the most naturalistic and objectionable details with a sort of satisfaction and pride."

"It is inconceivable."

"Yes, is it not? There is a kind of voluptuousness about disease, which is not felt about good health. Human nature is always giving me surprises. I am so astonished to see the thinness of the veneer of our education as civilised beings. At any rate I am glad to have been guided towards a place where I have youthful surroundings. It is rather noisy, but gay and healthy."

As I said this, we turned round and began to walk back again.

"That square tower is adorable," said my companion, looking at the massive Ouchy Château.

"Yes, it is all that remains of the old episcopal castle. A wealthy citizen had a fancy to rebuild it according to the original plans. It appears that he had so many worries with it all, and was so exasperated by the income tax and all the other taxes, that he sold it, and it was transformed into this hotel."

On the terrace of the imitation episcopal castle, we

chose a table a little way from the others under the shade of a big tree. I spread out my country flowers on the white cloth, by way of adorning the table, and the luncheon was then served. Maïa asked about my stay at St. Gervais. She then told me, in her usual graphic way, about the various episodes of her journey with the Aurannes. I asked her whether she were enjoying herself at Valcombe.

"Not exactly enjoying myself," she replied, "and yet I like being there. I like Savoy, it is wholesome, harsh and sweet at the same time. I always associate it with the perfume of cyclamen. Then, too, the people I am staying with are charming and so absolutely loyal. There is a sort of protection under their roof. Louise is one of my childhood's friends. She was married a year before I was. The idea of living in the same place influenced my choice a little," she added, with one of her little mocking laughs.

"Do your hosts still see Monsieur de Couzan?" I asked.

"Yes, but I do not mind that, as they have so much tact. They always invite him when the shooting begins. I even discovered that quite recently he had occupied the room I always have there."

"Oh, tell me about that."

"Ah, the novelist rouses at that!" said Maïa. "The incident is very slight and rather amusing. Yesterday morning, I opened the drawer of the big, bulgy chest in which I keep my handkerchiefs and took one out. On putting it into my blouse, it seemed very large and not like one of mine. I pulled it out again, unfolded it and what should I see in one of the corners but Monsieur de Couzan's crest with his initials, P. C., below it. Imagine, if you can, the grimace a woman would make

who, after being duly divorced for four years, finds her husband's linen among hers."

"I can imagine it," I said, laughing, "and my only regret is to have missed seeing it."

"I must have looked as amazed as one is on seeing a good conjuring trick. I called my maid, who was in the dressing-room and, picking up the object between my first finger and thumb, I asked her whose this handkerchief was? She came slowly up to me, took it, examined the hem, the embroidered corner and then said, in a very natural tone: 'It looks like one of *Monsieur le baron's*.'

"'And how can a handkerchief belonging to *Monsieur le baron* be amongst mine?' I asked with very creditable calmness.

"'The other day,' she said, 'the drawer came right out and I found a handkerchief behind, which I thought belonged to Madame. I put it with the others. There is no harm,' she went on, 'it will be easy enough to give it to the housekeeper. *Monsieur le baron* must have been using that chest, and valets are so careless,' she added.

"'Maids, too,' I said very severely. She turned away, glad to get off so easily. I was not at all duped by her. She had known very well whose handkerchief she was putting with mine."

"Do you think so?" I said:

"Oh, yes, I know Jenny very well. Her eyes were sparkling with mischief and then, too, she forgot to look surprised. Why did she play me that trick, I wonder? I am sure she did not want to be disagreeable, for she adores me. She had been with Mother five years when I married and Mother let me have her. She was very soon devoted to Monsieur de Couzan and all the

more so as she came from his part of the world. I fancy she was the first to guess that we did not get on well together. She could not understand the cause and the extent of our misunderstandings. She made the most comic and touching efforts to put matters right. To '*Monsieur le baron*,' she spoke of '*Madame la baronne*'s kindness, of her beautiful hair and white skin. I heard this myself. To me she chattered about the good qualities of my husband, she even spoke in admiration of his height and of his beautiful hands. Poor Jenny, she could not prevent our separation and that separation caused her real sorrow. During the divorce proceedings, she was almost unbearable. She came to wait on me with red eyes and she positively sulked. Her very sighs were full of reproach and of disapproval. Sometimes, when she was brushing my hair, she would pull it roughly, just as working women do with their naughty little girls. She blamed me, of course and, according to her, the cause of everything was that I had been spoiled too much. Her state of mind was that of those faithful dogs who look so wretched when they cannot follow both their master and their mistress, who go first to one and then to the other. Her affection wavered in the balance between Monsieur de Couzan and me. Fortunately he did not need a lady's maid, or she would certainly have left me for him, the horrible Savoy woman. I should have been wretched if she had, though," added Maïa, smiling. "Have you ever seen her?"

"No," I answered.

"I will send her to you, some day, and you must talk to her. She is quite a character. She is not one of the grand, pretentious maids of the present day. Her

hands might be more gentle, certainly, but they are always cool and wholesome. She is as fresh as an apple. I like seeing the reflection in the glass of her big face and her little dark, keen intelligent eyes. But with all that I cannot imagine what possessed her to put Monsieur de Couzan's handkerchief in amongst mine."

"Has she ever been married?" I asked.

"Yes, she was a widow soon after her marriage. Her husband died of tuberculosis. She used all her savings up in nursing him. For the last two years she had to keep the home together, but she always sent him to pay the rent, so that he should not feel humiliated. Then, too, only fancy, in spite of the doctor's advice she would not sleep in another room for fear of alarming her husband."

"I am not surprised at that. The finest human sentiments are found amongst this class, and such people are as unconscious of their own grandeur as these flowers are of their perfume," I added, taking up a few sprays of lavender. "Your grievances against Monsieur de Couzan must have seemed very trifling things to a woman who had borne and sacrificed so much." Maïa shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, when one is in love, everything is easy," she said and then, as our eyes met, she added, with affected irony, "at least I imagine so."

I made no remark, but a minute or two later I said:

"I fancy I can guess your Jenny's idea."

I saw from the little wave of emotion my words produced that my companion, too, had guessed.

"Tell me your idea," she said.

"Later on," I replied.

I began to laugh soon after at my own thoughts.

"What is it now, Granny?" asked Maïa.

"I was just thinking that I have heard two handkerchief stories within a week," I replied.

"Two handkerchief stories?"

"Yes, life is full of comic things," I said. "Last Monday I went down to Ouchy to tea. On arriving on the terrace of the Beau Rivage, I literally fell into the arms of an American woman I know, a woman who is still young, but who has been divorced for six or seven years and lives in Italy with her three children. She had brought her son back to college. After talking a little time, she told me, with an accent of triumph in her voice, that her husband had come to look her up at Lausanne and that he was staying at the Gibbon Hotel.

"'He asked for an interview to talk about the children,' she said. 'I agreed and we were out together for about an hour by the lake.'

"'And I suppose you flirted all the time,' I said, knowing her well.

"'Yes, it was very amusing,' she replied. 'Unfortunately I had a severe cold, as you see I still have, and I had no handkerchief. I had forgotten it and left it on the table. I sniffed and sniffed. Mr. Laurie, on seeing my misery, offered me his in the most husband-like way. "But, Frank," I exclaimed, "we are divorced, I cannot take your handkerchief." Thereupon we were both seized with wild laughter and we yelled. This brought tears to my eyes and increased my ills, so that I was compelled to accept my ex-husband's handkerchief. I sent it him back to-day, in an envelope, with my card. It was a very nice handkerchief from Boivin's.'"

"Oh, what a good story," exclaimed Maïa. "It is much better than mine. I must tell it at Valcombe this

evening. Well, at any rate divorce creates plenty of new situations that are most droll."

There was a note of anger in Maïa's voice that astonished me.

"I should not be surprised," I continued, "if that handkerchief were not to bring about a reconciliation between that couple."

"If you hear that it does, write and tell me, as it would amuse me," said Maïa, laughingly. "What a variety of people you must meet," she continued. "I am often quite troubled to think of you without a home, but I believe that the monotony of a limited circle would weigh on you now."

"I confess that it would," I said. "When once I knew the stories of my different friends by heart, and when I was accustomed to their expressions and their gestures, I should get a longing to move on most certainly. I like seeing the combinations which Nature creates with humanity, in the same way as in a cinematograph. I like imagining how it will construct its dramas and its comedies; all that interests me more and more. The landscape painter needs the sky, the sea and the trees, and the novelist needs human beings. I very rarely mingle with the life that is going on all around me, but I feel it, and I am convinced that its waves keep me afloat. If I were to be shut up in a flat I should feel sure that Providence had unharnessed me and put me aside for ever and I should be terribly humiliated."

Just at this moment the coffee was brought. We sat down in the garden arm-chairs. There was still a little of the summer warmth in the atmosphere. The Ouchy Square and Quays were quite deserted and there was a noontide tranquillity over the lake and over the

boats with their triangular sails. Maia had taken off her hat, and out of doors the bronze tints of her brown hair, the clearness of her complexion and the characteristic values of her face, showed up to advantage.

"Are your eyes blue or green?" I asked. "Do you know I cannot yet decide what colour they really are."

"You are not the only person who has been puzzled," she answered. "When I was a child they told me that my eyes were blue when I was good and green when I was naughty. It is more probably an effect of the light," she added, laughing.

"Ah, I do not know that. I am just going to watch the pupils. I am sure they go darker when you say bad things about life, and I fancy that when you were a child your eyes must have been more often green than blue."

"You are quite right," she replied seriously. "I was very difficult to bring up."

"Very much spoilt," I added.

"Not exactly spoilt, but not understood, like the majority of children . . . and looked after to an exaggerated degree. Mother would have liked to put me under a glass shade like a young melon. As she had no glass shade for me, she was in despair and so she stretched out her wings to protect me and to keep me out of all danger. That made her very happy and me very unhappy. I was a nineteenth century chicken and I needed air and freedom more than maternal warmth. . . . We ought to always ask fish how they would like to be eaten and children how they would like to be educated," she finished, making fun of her own words.

"Yes, but both the fish and the children would give us no information on the subject," I said, "for the

former would rather not be eaten and the latter would rather not be educated."

"And quite right of them, too. Joking apart, parents do not realise the fact that their offspring may be quite different from themselves. They forget that they are the products of various races, and are created for another epoch. They want to make them accept their ideas, their own tastes and to dress them in clothes that were not made for them. The consequence is they make them cross and disagreeable."

"And later on," I added, "the children throw the clothes off and then they are naked and cold."

"Yes, that is just it. Then, too, the mentality of the child assimilates, more or less, with that of the parents. With my father I was perfectly docile. His presence, the very sound of his voice, calmed me down and made me happy. It was as though all my little being said 'yes' to his 'yes.' It was as though our two lives had the same rhythm. With my mother, although I loved her very much, it was just the contrary. She made me impatient, and it was as though some instinct, that I cannot explain, induced me to oppose her. Uncle Henri, who was always curious about children, asked me once why I always disobeyed her. I had a piece of paper and some scissors in my hands and I answered quite calmly: 'Mother would want me to cut this paper square, and I am cutting it round.' That answer, for which I was naturally blamed, revealed my psychology as a child. If there was no harm in cutting my paper round, why should I not do it? Parents should merely guide a child, teach it the laws of duty, honour and humanity and then leave it between these big lines to develop freely and naturally."

"Yes, you are right," I said. "In France, most

parents slay all initiative and individuality in their sons. They create vocations for them which are quite unsuitable. They make doctors and lawyers of them because that career may fit in better with their own ambition or interests. On a visit to a country house, I once met a charming little boy of seven years old. He already had the dreams of a poet or an artist in his little mind. One day, when he saw me going out with the dog, he slipped his hand into mine and looked up at me with his blue eyes.

"Do you want me to come with Snap?" he asked. As you can imagine, I did not refuse. From that day forth, he always accompanied me on my walks. Every day, on one pretext or another, he managed to take me to the village laundry, as his little foster-sister was there. As soon as he saw her, his face would colour up with the emotion of love and I delighted in this exquisite thing. He was in sympathy with Nature and he used to gaze at the sky and the hills. Before going to bed at night, he insisted on being taken out to say 'Good-night,' as there was an echo not far from his home. His parents did not understand him at all. He might have come from another planet. One morning at luncheon, the father, who was both vain and silly, suddenly said to him: 'You are destined for the Polytechnic, my boy.' I shall never forget the scared look on the child's face, as he repeated the word: 'The Polytechnic, Papa?' he said, gazing in a bewildered way at his father. He was not for the Polytechnic, after all, as he died at the age of fourteen and I was very glad to hear of his death. He would have had a terrible struggle to get his liberty, if he had lived. I know plenty of men who have never dared to formulate an idea, or to have an opinion, before their marriage."

"That is what is called family sentiment," remarked Maïa.

"Yes, but family sentiment should be made up of mutual respect. The parents should have respect for the child, who represents the future, and the child should have respect for the parents, who represent the past."

"Tell people this, Granny, oh, do tell them," begged Maïa, speaking very gravely.

"Yes, I will," I replied, "even if I shock your mother and plenty of other people with her."

"The children of rich people are not as happy as they are supposed to be," said Maïa. "They do not suffer material privations, certainly, but they have no freedom. They are fettered by a hundred idiotic conventionalities. They eat their food without any appetite and they play their games without any zest. They are not beaten, but they are exasperated with sermons. In my pretty pink and white nursery, I have cried a great deal. I had two nurses, my former wet-nurse who was from Savoy, and a Swiss nurse. They were both excellent creatures, but incapable of bringing even a cat up properly. My mother's one fixed idea was that I should have excellent health, that I should be kept from all contagion, whether physical or moral. My food was all prepared in a little kitchen arranged specially for me, and with cooking utensils that were kept for this purpose. Up to the age of eight, I had never tasted anything but sterilized milk, water that had been filtered and doubly filtered, and mineral waters."

"That was a trifle exaggerated," I said, smiling.

"And dangerous, too," continued Maïa. "I will give you a proof. One day at our country place, at Mortin, I saw one of the coachmen drinking from the

pump, near the saddle room. I felt an instantaneous thirst for that natural looking water that he pumped up and drank at once. I tried to get some, but I was not allowed. Well, the idea of it haunted me and I used to think of the way it spurted out of the pump. One day I managed to escape from my nurses and I turned one of the taps of the forbidden water on. I drank it thirstily like a young dog and I thought it tasted exquisite and went to it several times after this. The result was that I had typhoid fever and went very near to Paradise. Uncle Henri had all his work before him to keep me back on earth. The microbe had evidently found a kind of virgin soil within me, and had developed finely. Such care was taken of me always that I had to go without numbers of things. In the Champs Elysées my nurse was not allowed to buy sticks of barley sugar for me. I sucked the sticks of my little friends though, on the sly. I was not allowed to make dirt pies, I was not allowed to go to the Punch and Judy show. Fortunately I had my whip and my top. My top was like a person and I made it turn according to my moods. Sometimes I was angry with it and sometimes very gentle. I corrected it and whipped it mercilessly, or I just lashed it tenderly and was most kind to it. As a rule, I worked off all my bad temper on it."

"Ah, that just corroborates my observation," I exclaimed, with great pleasure. "I often stand still to watch children playing with their whipping-top. It is quite a revelation to anyone who is studying life. Their faces betray all kinds of passions and sentiments, unkindness, and often cruelty, but above everything the satisfaction of being able to whip something, and those lashes, constantly repeated, seem to produce in them a

sort of wild intoxication, which, when it has arrived at its climax, dies away again and leaves them exhausted."

"Yes, that is just it," said Maïa. "I can remember my feelings quite well."

"The game is a very old one," I said; "it must have been a safety valve that Nature discovered for bringing into activity the forces that are developed in the human being."

"I can tell you it really was a safety valve for me," said Maïa. "I was of rather a war-like nature and I felt the need of giving blows and of quarrelling. I have often envied little street urchins whom I saw fighting and tearing after each other. Mother gave me everything except the little companions that my age required. If I had not had my ponies and dogs I should have been worthy of pity."

"Brought up in a hothouse, as you were, you must have developed early?" I said insidiously.

"Alas, yes, and I wore everyone out with my questions. When I asked my nurses what anything was for, they used to tell me it was to make me talk. My mother did her best to answer my questions, but she used constantly to tell me that I was a queer child. I can remember that I was always in search of emotions."

"You wanted to feel yourself living," I said, "that was all."

"I had a certain pleasure in sobbing, in feeling any grief. I used to make scenes for the sake of the reconciliations afterwards. I can remember the first time I felt any modesty. Uncle was away and I had a severe cold. My mother was always very quickly alarmed, so she sent for another doctor. He wanted to sound me and he said, 'You must take her dress off.' All my little being protested and I refused energetically to be

undressed. The words made a curious impression on me and every time that they came into my mind again they gave me a sensation that was disagreeable and at the same time pleasant. Can you understand that?"

"Perfectly well, the reaction of modesty is always sensuality. The more the modesty has been developed the more refined — and even agreeable is the sensuality," I said, smiling.

"I examine my conscience, now, retrospectively and in my early childhood, healthy and wholesome as it was, protected from everything, I can remember astounding intuitions, which prove that a past had been lived and that there was a good foundation of perverseness — human nature, I suppose," she added.

"Oh, do not say that," I exclaimed. "That is just a phrase like counterfeit coin, which all the generations have been passing without examining. Why should hypocrisy, envy and everything else that is ugly always be attributed to human nature. When there is any fine action or great devotion of any kind we never say that that is 'human nature.' "

"No," answered Maïa, "you are right."

"We are flagrantly unjust to ourselves," I said, "and this always annoys me. The higher forces are also 'human nature' and this human nature is struggling with the whole Universe for progress and perfection. In your childish soul could you not also discover higher instincts, generous feelings and all kinds of fine things?"

"Yes, thank Heaven."

"Well, then, that was the light; and, logically, that was to have the victory."

"Let us hope you are right," said Maïa, clasping her hands nervously. "That disobedience that made me

have typhoid fever resulted in my having an English governess. Miss Lang was just the woman I needed. The day after her arrival, when we were out in the Champs Elysées, I was going to cross the road alone. ‘You must not do that,’ she said, taking my hand in a way that made me feel at once the force of her will-power. It was simply with that phrase that she brought me up from that day forth. I am not exactly a success,” added Maïa, with a sly smile, “but I might have been worse.”

Just at this moment she saw a group of people going towards the Quay.

“Oh, my boat!” she exclaimed, rising and seizing her hat. I assured her that we had plenty of time and we walked slowly down to the landing stage.

“Maïa,” I said, on the way there, “do you know you have forgotten to say any bad things about Life.”

“You may be sure that I think them, though,” she answered, and then, putting her arm affectionately through mine, she added:

“This time spent with you has been very good.”

“It has been too short,” I said. “You must come and spend a whole day with me, before leaving Savoy. I want to do the honours of Lausanne and to show you a part of the Sauvabelin Forest.”

“I should like to come immensely,” said Maïa, shaking hands heartily.

On my way home to Lausanne, I thought over our conversation. I had tried many times to get Maïa to confide in me, but always without success. My question about the colour of her eyes had opened the way. I feel quite tranquil now. She has felt the pleasure of telling about herself and she will now go on again. I have my red thread!

*Lausanne.*

The following is the way a poor author is led on. Ten years ago, as I have already said, I went to Rheinfelden. There were good table d'hôte meals in those days, and one day, at luncheon, one of my neighbours spoke to me about the beauty of the trees at the Beau Rivage of Ouchy.

"Yes," I said, "I have always admired them immensely. The luxuriant verdure must be a result of the near proximity to the water. About two hundred yards further along there is a country house, the D—— which also has some wonderful trees and they are planted in a better way, as they neither hide the lake nor the mountains. I have often wished I could sit down under their shade."

A lady who was a new arrival, and who was seated opposite to me, smiled, as I said this, in a way that I did not understand. The next day she bowed to me and we talked a little.

"I was glad to hear your appreciation of that house at Ouchy," she remarked, "for we have just bought it."

"Oh, have you, really?" I said, amused at the coincidence. "Well, I certainly envy you."

"When you come to Ouchy, you will be perfectly welcome to come there at your pleasure," she said cordially. I thanked her and this was the commencement of an acquaintanceship that was to outlive that summer season. Two years later, I visited that country house with an American friend. When we alighted from the carriage and she saw the tall trees, and the sky, which was intensely blue that day, the mountains, the lake and the white sails of a boat gliding over the water in the background, she exclaimed: "Is this Eden?"

I have just been spending a few very happy days in

this Eden. . We are always most careful to make a note of our sorrows and disappointments and we even exaggerate them, but we are silent about the pleasant things that come to us in life. I always take them into account now, out of a sentiment of justice to the gods. It makes me smile to find that, added to this sentiment, is a secret hope that I may in this way encourage them to overwhelm me again with the pleasant things of life. It is curious how these gleams of child-like faith and atavism persist, even when the mind is mature.

At D—— then, I had all the enjoyment of pleasant hospitality, of friendship, of young people, flowers and animals. Seated under the big chestnut trees, I experienced that kind of hypnotism into which the extreme beauty of Nature sometimes plunges us. Nothing more seemed to exist for me, and nothing was anything to me. It seemed as though there were nothing else beyond this wonderful horizon. Both I and "the other one" were perfectly satisfied. I can now quite understand the slackness, the dreaminess and the indifference of the Vaudois and of all other people whose skies are too glorious. Without being aware of the fact, they are affected by their skies just as I was.

I thoroughly enjoyed, too, one of the last bursts of Summer. The air was full of day-flies which were dancing madly. Moths and insects visiting all the flower cups in curious haste were seized with a kind of rage on finding so many empty. The rage of insects and the rage of people must be of about the same importance in the Universe.

One morning, when that somewhat discouraging thought had just crossed my mind, my eyes fell on a magnificent hawk-moth which was taking its meal in the heart of a sage-blossom bluer than the sky. It plunged

its long proboscis into the flower and kept outside itself by an incessant vibration of its wings which I had hitherto stupidly taken for an expression of glutinous voluptuousness. I understood all at once that if its rather big body had rested on the petals, it would have bent them and that its cup would then have been too long. I remembered that the bee rests on the flower and bends it so that it may take the fertile pollen that it is to carry away. These two different movements revealed calculation and, as all calculation demands thought, I saw in all this the thoughtfulness of the Eternal God. It would have been impossible to account for things in any other way and, as usual, the proof of this actual presence soothed me.

In the midst of my beatitude, the *leitmotiv* of my book kept coming to disturb me. "The Heart of Life!" I felt Life all around me. I felt it in all its ardour, its mystery and its depth, full of secrets and full of wonders. I felt sure that it was just as great down in its abysses as on its heights, but that it was unfathomable to me in my ignorance.

Since Maïa Lasserre's visit I had not written a line. The first word for the next chapter would not come to me and I wondered whether it ever would come. At the close of each chapter of my four volumes I have experienced the anguish of this doubt. And one of my critics has nevertheless reproached me with having too much self-confidence! This uneasiness of mind has somewhat spoilt my visit here. The day before my departure I was on the terrace near the Ouchy Quay with my hostess. Two girls, with their tennis-rackets in their hands, were talking quite near to us.

"Ah, mankind is not beautiful!" we heard one of

them say. This unexpected remark made me listen more attentively.

"No, but very interesting all the same," observed the other girl, in a warmer tone of voice. I was amazed and turned to my companion.

"Why these remarks?" I asked, smiling.

"Well," explained Mlle. B——, a pretty, dark girl with laughing eyes and a good-natured smile, "we belong to a society called 'The Drop of Milk.' Do you know it?"

"Yes, I fancy it started in France.

"We are on duty there twice a week and, during consultation hours, we see human specimens of every kind. Like Louise, I thought them frightful at first. Then they began to interest me. Now I like them and they therefore seem quite nice to me."

"In Paris and in Lyons this society works very well and the results are good," I said.

"At Lausanne, too, we often see miserable looking creatures, who seem at the last stage, gradually develop into quite fine little men, thanks to our milk. The lady doctor teaches the mothers how to take care of their children. Even that you see has to be learned. Poor women! Their youngsters cause them no end of trouble. I wonder they ever have a second one," added the girl naïvely.

"I should like to be there for one of these consultations," I said. "Would it be possible?"

"Nothing could be more easy," answered my hostess. "We might go there to-morrow."

The "Drop of Milk" Society has its offices at the "People's Home," a building given by a philanthropist. To the honour of Switzerland we must say that there

are many such men there. Monsieur X—— employs the greater part of his fortune in helping the poor and in ameliorating their conditions of life. He lives very simply himself. The anarchists, to whom he offers hospitality, object to his living at all. Hitherto he has not given them the satisfaction of having just what they want, but, as he is an idealist, they still have reason to hope, and in the meantime he opens his purse most generously to them.

The "People's Home" consists of two long, low buildings of very modest aspect. In what is known as the "Old House" are the Co-operative Society Stores, the library, and the little theatre, where pieces are played and concerts and lectures given.

In the New House, built above a precipice where the Flon used to flow formerly, are the workrooms and the Society of the "Drop of Milk."

After going down a somewhat shaky wooden staircase, we found ourselves on a little terrace, where we stopped for a time to enjoy the view, which is one of the most picturesque of Lausanne. Between two hills there is a wide opening, on the sides of which the houses and the factories can be seen. On the opposite side, and very high up, a number of brown roofs and chimneys stand out against the sky, whilst the massive cathedral, with its graceful lines, is surrounded by old grey houses. All this is most compact and at the same time irregular. It is picturesque and ugly at the same time. It seems quite near, it towers above one and seems to dominate everything. At our feet a strip of sloping land, covered with scanty grass and planted with a few trees, no doubt represented the park of the "People's Home."

There was one bench there and a woman was sitting on it sewing. Her two little children, dressed in red,

were climbing and rolling about near her. On turning round I saw that the door of the "Drop of Milk" Society was wide open. At the threshold I stopped a moment, charmed and delighted by the picture of modern life that met my eyes — one of those pictures with very crude colouring, the beauty and poetry of which will be seen later on. It was a kitchen for children, full of light, with a stove, all the utensils for sterilizing milk, a long table and some immense brown pails for milk. A young woman and two girls, with light dresses protected by aprons, were attending to things. They were wearing hats and had bare arms.

One of them was superintending the sterilization whilst the other washed the bottles energetically. Her companion then filled and placed them in little wire baskets for the mothers to take away.

Our arrival interrupted an animated discussion. A doctor had just written that the sterilization of the milk was bad, as it destroys the necessary and useful microbes. Our opinion was asked and I replied that sterilized milk was certainly dead.

"Some children refuse to take it," said my hostess's niece. "I have always declared that the natural milk of healthy cows must be better than cooked up milk."

"Yes, but as it is impossible to be sure of the good health of all the cows, it is better, perhaps, to make all the milk harmless," observed the aunt.

"Later on, naturalists, biologists and philosophers will be able to study the pre-bottle man and the man of the bottle," I put in, smiling.

"Well, it is very annoying to think that we may be going to so much trouble for something that is not only useless, but harmful," said Mlle. B—. "It is enough to make one give up altogether!"

"Do not your children gain in weight?" I asked.

"Yes, they certainly do," she answered, beaming with pleasure. "Doctors really ought not to start theories which drive you to despair so thoughtlessly."

This conversation, which would have surprised and even horrified many people, gave me keen pleasure. It proved to me that these girls had entered into Life and by the right door.

From the kitchen we went into the consultation room. It was well lighted and somewhat scantily furnished. There were no flowers, as there would have been in England. There were chairs, a table with scales, the lady doctor's desk and women with babies that they were dressing or undressing. Poor little creatures, how feeble and ugly and pitiful they looked in their nakedness! These were not classical cherubs with perfect limbs and firm, soft flesh. They were intended for the rough work of life and some of them looked very badly equipped. There were all sorts and colours of children. I should never have thought it possible for the skin of one white person to be so different from the skin of another one. One child was of an ivory tone, another milky white, another greyish and another pinky. Some had fair hair and light eyes; others had hair of a warmer shade with red cheeks. Then there were some dark and swarthy children. In these swaddling clothes, which, by the way, were very clean, I saw fragile little bodies already anaemic, with low vitality, and others very robust with high vitality. I saw busts that were too long, legs too short, and all this was certainly not beautiful.

One of the ladies or girls took the child from the mother, and put it on the felt-covered scales. She then amused it by laughing or snapping her fingers, whilst someone else attended to the weight and inscribed the

result opposite a name. It was all done so quickly that the child had no time to protest, except by stiffening its limbs instinctively. The mother then took the paper to the doctor who felt the child's legs and arms, with a truly maternal touch, and wrote a prescription or else gave the necessary instructions to the mother in a low voice. All this was done with the coldness peculiar to Protestants, but also with their method and dignity.

This weighing operation reminded me of a certain phrase I had read in a newspaper article about the Russo-Japanese war. "Trans-Siberia can only furnish an output of from 1,400 to 1,500 men a day." This word "output," applied to human forces, had given me a start on reading it. It is scientifically right nevertheless, and it will appear fine to us when once we understand. And they were these same forces that had just been entered, in my presence, in the book of Life. Whence had they all come? Most certainly from the very depths of the Infinite. I glanced at the humble women before me. Ah, they were all quite unconscious, quite ignorant, of the grandeur of their rôle on this Earth and in the Universe. I wish they could have understood it. There would have been more pride in the expression of their faces then. Providence had found in them, and in certain male creatures of their kind, the elements necessary for its army on Earth, had brought them together, in spite of all obstacles, and had united them. The act of transmission had then taken place. Invisible agents had worked for months in Nature's most sacred tabernacles, and these children had been born. And these mothers do not know what they have in their arms, a creature of sorrow or of joy, of glory or of shame, a weakling or an artist, a simple

soldier or a chief, a genius or an idiot. They do not know, mercifully, but God knows.

One of the objects of our present evolution, the most complete evolution that our world has known, is evidently to increase human forces and strength, to make our Earth-dwellers help each other more efficaciously and in a different spirit.

The work of the "Drop of Milk" seems to me admirable for developing altruism, a virtue which is not easily produced. The flesh of little babies, and of children in general, possesses a curious magnetism. People stroke it over and over again with more and more pleasure, and mothers and nurses kiss it fondly. This special magnetism decreases as the child grows, and by the time it is seven years old the magnetism no longer exists.

Is it given so that the little ones may be sure of care and love? I do not know, but that is very possible. Nature, and more particularly its feminine essence, has the most adorable ruses, it has philters and charms which make us obedient to its plans. On seeing these women and girls holding the children of the people in their arms, I thought to myself that some of them might, perhaps, be affected by the invisible fluid and this might awaken within them the consciousness of human fraternity.

The words fraternity and solidarity have been so much abused that one scarcely dares to use them now. They have become almost ridiculous, out of date. They are suggestive of the accompaniment of a street organ. Electors are the only people left capable of taking them seriously. And yet fraternity and solidarity exist in Nature.

Men have always been killing or ruining each other,

but they have always been helping each other too. There are examples of great devotion and of noble sacrifice to their credit. I do not know how Life could have continued without that.

But do they really love each other? No, not yet. The best among them have tried, thanks to an elevated idealism or to religious sentiment, with the idea of being rewarded in this world or the other,—but more especially in this world.

The rich man does not feel that he is the brother of the poor man and the poor man does not feel that he is the brother of the rich man. A gentleman does not feel that he is the brother of his tailor, and a great lady does not feel that she is the sister of her dressmaker. Most certainly they have no affection for each other.

How should it be otherwise? We do not know each other and are as much strangers as though we belonged to different planets. Society women, for instance, know nothing of the workwomen who clothe and adorn them, to whom they owe their triumphs of vanity and sometimes of love. They know nothing of the domestic life of these women, of their inner life, of their sorrows and joys. They little think that there are heroines among them and even martyrs; that there are women who are extremely high-minded, and characters that are charming.

The workwomen, too, know nothing of these other women for whom they prick their fingers, whose luxurious habits help them to earn their living. They only see them when they are thinking of their dresses and trying them on and they look upon them as so many dolls. When speaking of a customer who has just ordered a pretty dress, they are apt to say what luck she has. They little think that the beautiful dress may be

worn over a sad heart. They have no idea, either, that a society woman's day is often longer and more trying than their own.

Nineteen centuries of Christianity and endless social revolutions have not yet brought individuals together. Between the rich and the poor, between masters and workmen, the wall of yore has given way to what only appears to be a partition, but the partition is there. The master knows neither the mentality nor the character of his work-people, so that he cannot make use of their best powers. He pays for the work of their arms but he has not the co-operation of their will-power and of their devotion. He does not know those words which bind together, which are the means of assuring "elbow-grease." He does not treat his workmen as his collaborators, as the agents of his prosperity, and consequently they, on their side, separate their cause from his. The workmen refuse to see, or are unable to understand, the immense costs and responsibilities of their employers. In all strikes, and in all social quarrels, this mutual ignorance can be felt and the agitators only increase it.

It is not only that we do not know each other, but we do not know what we were intended to be to each other. Scientific men will teach us this by degrees. Without being aware of it, and each one in his own special line, they are all working towards this revelation. Before very long, they will have penetrated into the psychical domain, where all our threads are to be found, together with the plan of Life and of communications. Before very long, too, they will be able to register the radio-activity of all visible and invisible beings. With their microscopes, which enable them to see the millionth part of a millimetre, their improved alembics and their vari-

ous systems of projections, they will finally discover the circulation of Life, just as they discovered the circulation of the blood. Thanks to them we shall then see to what an immense extent we all affect each other. Thanks to them, we shall feel the fibres, the roots, the current and the fluids which unite all creatures, and what we now call the social gulf will then cease to exist. Human fraternity will come forth from those laboratories and then cosmic fraternity. The truth of things will begin to "shine through," as the Swiss vintners say when the bunches of grapes get transparent.

Know thyself, know each other, know Life, know God. All that is surely what the inhabitants of this Earth have yet to learn. It will take them some thousands of years and I am glad of that. I would rather think of our planet as the theatre of the struggle of gods and men than imagine it extinguished and silent for ever. It is better to suffer than not to exist or to no longer exist.

On coming away from the "Drop of Milk," I felt that I had a chapter to write. Oh, the joy of that sensation. Here it is, good or bad.

In order to write it, I had to go to Rheinfelden ten years ago, to be invited to D——, a girl near me had to exclaim that there was nothing beautiful about mankind. It took all that for me to be led to go to see this Society. Whilst I was writing these pages, I could see the little red arms and the thin little legs moving about, arms that will have to lift heavy burdens, legs that will have to go many rough journeys. The necessity of feeding all these little creatures and of fortifying them does not seem to me to be an act of charity, but an act of wise social economy. The purer milk and better air

that is procured for these children will be transformed into energy that will be for the benefit of everyone. The health of society at large depends on the health of the people. This is the inevitable law of human solidarity, of physical and moral solidarity.

*Lausanne.*

My wish has been gratified, for Maïa Lasserre and M. de Couzan have met each other in my presence.

Unfortunately the meeting was too brief for me to be able to make many observations and then, too, it was out of doors. We are always less affected by the radio-activity of human beings out of doors than between four walls.

In spite of my ignorance, and at the risk of appearing ridiculous, I use that word radio-activity. Before very long, the thing may be known as electricity is and, at any rate, I feel it very distinctly. In a small place and between four walls, it is more easy to recognise a friend or an enemy, love or hatred, congeniality or antipathy. I should have known more about the state of mind of my divorced friends then, if I had met them in-doors, but it did not seem to me that they were as indifferent to each other as they pretend to be. They even gave me the magnetic sensation of love. Of course this may have been the effect of my imagination, but I do not think it was. I feel sure that they will meet again and without my help, and that would be a good sign. On the other hand I have some misgivings. A husband and wife may be able to forgive each other certain faults, but when they are divorced because they do not get on well together, it seems as though Nature is pronouncing the decree.

I wrote to Madame Lasserre from D—— telling her

that I should like to see Évian again. She replied asking me to spend the day with her, so that, immediately after my return to the hotel, I went by the morning boat out to her. The weather was so mild and the lake so *good*, that I was able to stay on deck, comfortably installed in an arm-chair.

Thanks to this, I did not lose any of the curious and ever-changing effects of the scenery. From the port of Ouchy, Lausanne is lost to sight. With every turn of the wheels, the hills which surround it, its houses, buildings, its Cathedral and its Castle gradually form a magnificent amphitheatre. The lines of the Swiss coast then become clear and gulfs and capes appear. The paddle-wheel of the *Helvetia* kept turning, the panorama faded gradually away just as it had appeared until the Autumn mist hid it from sight.

In the direction of Geneva, the sky and water seemed to touch, forming a very distant horizon. Thanks to its shape, Lake Leman looks like a vast sea at a certain point and it even has metallic reflexions like the sea.

After enjoying this phenomenon for a time, I turned my chair round in the direction of Évian. I had seen the Swiss coast disappear in the mist and now, from the banks opposite, I saw the Savoy coast emerging out of the mist. I could distinguish the rounded outlines of its high mountains, its gay, beautifully shaded hills; I could see its villages, grouped around their church steeple and finally, the amphitheatre of the little watering place, the Casino, the Bathing Establishment, its huge hotels, the Quay and its elder trees and the animation of its tiny port. In all this, there was the light, the aspect and the gaiety which seemed to me to be the three living colours of France. On the Amphion side, I saw an automobile arriving at full speed in the midst of

a cloud of dust. I felt sure that it was bringing Madame Lasserre. My intuition was right, for it stopped opposite the bridge and Maïa sprang out just as I landed. Our movements had been wonderfully combined.

"Oh, Granny, I was so afraid that I should not be here in time for the arrival of the boat," she exclaimed, as soon as we met.

"Well, I should have waited for you," I said. "It is ten minutes to eleven at Lausanne, but it is only ten minutes to ten here. The time differing an hour is more inconvenient than one would think. I am quite ashamed to think that I have made you get up so early."

"Pleasant days cannot be commenced too early," replied Maïa. "Let me adorn you first," she continued, putting a bunch of violets such as she was wearing herself into my button-hole.

"You see, I have the auto, so that we can wander about as we like, lunch at the Grand Hôtel and then I will take you towards Meillerie, where there are some wonderful chestnut avenues. Does that suit you?"

"Yes, it all sounds delightful."

We chatted for a little time and then Maïa took off her long coat, gave her orders to the chauffeur and came back to me. The drive in the fresh air had increased the brilliancy of her complexion, her eyes and her lips. She was wearing a grey cloth costume, a three-cornered grey felt hat trimmed with a long veil of the same shade. Her jacket was fastened at the waist and showed to advantage the beautiful lines of her shoulders and bust. Her white blouse and white cambric necktie, fastened with just a cat's-eye brooch, added to the simplicity of her costume.

"What a pretty harmony in grey you make," I said, in admiration.

"Do you like this dress?" she asked.

"Very much," I answered.

"That's right," she said, and then, putting her arm through mine, she led the way to the town.

"One likes an author to approve," she continued, "no matter of which sex the author may be. One always has a vague hope that he or she may reproduce some trait of one's face or one's character. At any rate it is very difficult not to pose when in the presence of an author."

"I hope you do not see the novelist in me now."

"It is impossible not to," she replied.

"Is that really so?" I asked, amazed. "But I am scarcely aware of his existence, myself."

"Yes, that is just it. You have become the novelist and the novelist has become you."

"Well," I said, smiling, "I did not think you were so metaphysical. At any rate I have always found you quite natural. Your sentiments and your auto-observations have never sounded false to my well-trained ear."

"Oh, I have never tried to make myself appear interesting, but I hoped you would be interested in me all the same."

"You have never tried making your confession though!"

"I am waiting until I have some fine sin to confess that will be worthy of a heroine," she said, with a glance that seemed like a feeler.

"Do not commit the sin for the pleasure of having it to confess and for the sake of astonishing me."

"My vanity will not take me as far as that, and I fancy it would have to be a big sin to astonish you."

" You remind me of one of the girls who was at the convent with me. She confessed that she had committed adultery and she was then fifteen."

" Only that!"

" Only that. She had been told that it was a sin that was only committed by grown-up persons and she was accusing herself, in order to produce an effect."

" I should like to have seen her confessor."

" He must have lectured her very severely for her flagrant lie. She came out of the confessional box, in tears. The curious part of the affair is that ten years later she really was guilty of this sin."

" That certainly is strange."

" It can be explained by a sort of prescience. I have noticed that romantic women always try to make themselves appear interesting. They make their sins or their trials appear greater than they really are, when they are with their confessor, that is when they do not entirely invent them. For their doctor, they find the most extraordinary symptoms and when they are with an artist or a novelist they try to appear poetical. Perhaps among their ancestors, they had some literary person and the atavism is at work in their brain cells."

Madame Lasserre laughed.

" Oh, Granny," she said. " How do you think I can forget that you are Pierre de Coulevain."

" Should you like a proof that our minds have been put into communication with each other?"

" Indeed I should."

" Well, you have just started a conversation on a subject about which I have been meditating all the week."

" Really?"

" Yes, there is a little girl in the hotel who plays that horrible diabolo game with the greatest skill. When

there are people watching her she plays with the most charming grace and coquettishness. The admiration she excites and which she *feels* makes her accomplish wonders of skill. Whilst watching her, I began to think of the innate need we all have, in a greater or less degree, of producing an effect on each other. I saw, finally, that all this serves Life in one way or another."

"I am so glad, Granny, that instead of abusing humanity, you try to justify it."

"No, I try to understand it. I look upon it and I study it as the work and instrument of God. It seems greater and greater and more and more wonderful to me. When I discover some common instinct or defect, I try to discover what end it serves and of what use it is. I soon discover that it is something which is indispensable to the machinery at present, but I know that it will be modified and that it will either disappear or be transformed. The crowd, for instance, does not see anything that is on its own level and this is why men find it necessary to make themselves pedestals. When these pedestals are made of *papier-mâché* they give way, the individuals disappear with them and the effect is only transitory. When the pedestal is composed of elements that are necessary and durable, the figure remains, all eyes are turned towards it, minds are impressed by it and the eternal play of transmission is accomplished."

"It must be agreeable to feel that one is celebrated."

"Fortunately for me I do not know whether it is or not. I have had all kinds of ambitions, all kinds of vanity, but never that one. To belong to the public, whether living or dead, seems to me a terrible thing. The public is still in a barbarous state, for it violates the life and the very soul of its savants, its writers and

its artists and turns them out on the pavement, just as it has done with the statue of Alfred de Musset. As to prestige, that is necessary. An American woman I know came away very much disappointed after an audience with Pius X. The Pope was wearing a short, white cassock and had made no impression whatever on her. She was perfectly furious at having gone to so much trouble for the sake of seeing 'an old priest in a dressing-gown.'

"Is not that truly American?"

"No, it is human. We still need illusions, art and even a certain amount of pose."

"Pose? Oh, Granny, do you really think so?"

"Certainly I do, for very few people understand simplicity. I will give you one proof among a thousand. A person, whom I had not met since I had become a novelist, invited me one day to luncheon, when I happened to be staying in her neighbourhood. She lives in a little provincial town. She was amazed to find that I was just the same as formerly. I do not know whether she expected that I should be wearing a halo round my hat, but at any rate she was woefully disappointed in me. When she discovered that I was still living in an hotel and that I did not know any of the great writers and artists, I went down considerably in her estimation. Among many of my readers, I have noticed the same sentiment and I will go still further in my psychological study and own frankly that, thanks to my way of living, I do not make any effect on myself."

Madame Lasserre laughed outright.

"Oh, Granny," she said, "what a thing to say!"

"It is perfectly true. How could I fancy myself anyone important when I live in hotels and am only

*a number*, when my tools consist of about a dozen books, accumulators, three pens and some little white exercise books. I certainly have no stage properties."

"Yes, that is quite true," said Maïa, gravely. "You will no doubt think me very bourgeois, horribly bourgeois, but I must say that I regret your wandering life. I should like you to have a beautiful study in which to work."

"With a library and rows of well-bound books that I should never read, but which would make me a beautiful background. My study would, of course, have a very imposing writing table, objects of art and pictures. You would also like me to be surrounded with plenty of people, I suppose?"

"Yes, why not?"

"Because I should then lose my precious liberty."

"Yes, you are quite right and I should be the first one to suffer. For I should never have you to myself again like to-day."

"And I should, perhaps, put on very grand airs."

"*You* put on very grand airs! I do not fancy you would."

"I am not so sure of that. I have been surprised at myself several times. With certain persons, I have found myself stretching my neck and trying to give myself the air of being *someone*. I assure you that I am capable of being as ridiculous as anyone, and the curious part is that, after one of these fits of vanity, I study the phenomenon, using myself for the object lesson. Unfortunately my natural vivacity always prevents me from keeping up the pose long enough. It is very evident, therefore, that I was not intended for a novelist with a fixed abode, but for 'a roamer.' That was necessary, in order that I might become acquainted

with Life. There is no sensation equal to that of becoming conscious of what Life is. I only hope that you may know this some day. There are times when it gives me the most intense joy, such complete joy that it sometimes frightens me. It seems to me that it must surely be a joy which only belongs to our last days."

Maïa pressed my arm, and I felt that I was causing her needless pain by talking like this.

"You will not leave us until you have finished your work," she said.

"You do not think my work is finished?" I asked.

"Certainly not," she answered, in that decided tone which she frequently adopts to hide her emotion.

"Well, then, for the present, let us enjoy this beautiful day and go and drink a glass of the Évian water. I would cross the lake for that alone. It is certainly the best water Nature has prepared for us yet. It gives a sensation of Alpine pureness and freshness to the palate. I am not quoting any advertisement."

After going to the Bathing Establishment, we took one of the steep streets of the little town. I stopped every now and then, under the pretext of looking at the lake, but in reality to get breath. We wandered about haphazard, in the most enjoyable way, visiting a couple of churches and stopping at the shop windows to look at the bargains on sale for the end of the season. How pathetic these ends of the season are. Madame Lasserre made a few purchases and whilst *reflexioning*, as the Vaudois people say, we walked down again to the Quay.

"It is impossible not to see," I said, as I looked round, "that every agglomeration of individuals creates a special moral atmosphere. That of Évian is quite

different from that of Lausanne. The people, the houses and the very streets have a gayer look and we are greeted everywhere in a more genial way. The girls of the lower class have a certain grace and coquetry and even a little art. The boatmen handle their sails and oars with less regularity, perhaps, than their Swiss neighbours, but with more spirit and there is keen intelligence in their eyes. Have you noticed how beautiful the brown eyes of these Savoy people are?" I added, thoughtlessly.

On seeing the blush that came to Maïa's face, I realised how tactless I had been, but was rather surprised all the same.

"Yes, I have noticed," she said, with a little nervous laugh.

"The very country has a different soul," I continued. "This coast, with its gentle undulations, its windings and its mysterious, violet shadows, seems to me Catholic. The Swiss coast is better cultivated, more open, but more dry looking. It is essentially Calvinistic, and more particularly so from Lausanne to Geneva."

"Is not that an effect of your imagination?"

"I thought so myself, at first, but a woman of Lausanne, who is a Protestant, told me the same thing, one day."

Just then we arrived at a shady spot, stretching out towards the lake.

"Ah, we are certainly in France," I said, laughing, "there is no doubt about that. Look at all these scraps of paper on the grass. If we were in Switzerland, there would be some baskets about with the words: 'For Paper,' written on them in big letters."

"There are some now on the Boulevards."

"Yes, but Parisians have not a very active and in-

telligent love of their city yet. They do not yet realise that every citizen ought to contribute to its embellishment and to its healthiness. This is taught in all the schools of the Confederation. Mothers and women of the lower class teach their children to respect the public gardens. They make them carry all their rubbish to the municipal basket. I have watched this many a time and have been delighted to see it. This untidiness is deplorable with such a wonderful panorama before us," I added.

We turned our backs on the scraps of paper and went and leaned on the railings. The sky, the water and the mist were all of the most extraordinarily soft colouring. The lake itself was of a milky blue and scarcely seemed to sway the sea-gulls resting on its surface.

"Is it not beautiful?" I said after a few moments of silent admiration.

"Yes, as beautiful as though there were no sorrow in the world," replied my companion, looking away from the lake and beginning to walk again.

"There might be nothing but sorrow. This beauty, at any rate means hope."

Maïa shrugged her shoulders.

"But, Granny, those who suffer do not see it. A wild toothache or heartache would be quite enough to make us insensible to all the beauties of earth and sky. Then, too, people must have a certain culture if they are to be consoled by the beauties of Nature. What about the others who have no culture?"

"They are probably comforted in another way. Face to face with such perfect harmony, it is difficult to believe that Life is evil."

Just as I said this, a child's invalid carriage met us.

We looked at the little occupant and we both had a violent shock.

"What about that?" asked Maïa, in a harsh, ironical tone.

The child which had suddenly made its appearance, as though as a protest to my optimism, was lying down. Its tongue was hanging out of its mouth on its under lip.

"How dreadful it looks!" said Maïa.

"Yes, indeed," I answered, with a pang at my heart.

"Poor little creature, it never asked to be born."

"Oh, Maïa," I said, "that is one of the childish speeches that we ought all to forget. We do not have to ask to be born, but when we have received life we cling to it desperately."

"We are perhaps not free to do otherwise. The instinct of self-preservation which binds us to our misery is a refinement of cruelty."

"No, for in that very instinct is saving grace, the love of life. We love life and those who suffer love it more than anyone. I once knew an unfortunate man who had a nervous complaint which made him most repulsive. I thought that he must surely be longing to die, but he told me that he had tried a certain treatment under Dr. Charcot, but that he had not dared to continue it, as he feared his heart was too weak for it."

"Have you ever seen a Lourdes pilgrimage?" asked Maïa, stopping suddenly.

"No," I answered.

"Oh, well, I have, and I can assure you that when one sees so many physiological horrors and so many tortured creatures, one wonders where God is."

"He is in the forces of disease just as He is in the

forces of health. If only we could look at them scientifically and analyse them, we should see that these forces are wonderful organisms which must live and die and which are used for making human destinies."

"Frightful destinies!" interrupted Maïa.

"Yes, but no suffering is in vain. Sick people are the martyrs of life and there are palms for the martyrs. You ask where God is? He is in the hope that sustains these poor afflicted ones."

"Hope that is always deceived."

"But which always springs up again."

"For a long time I could never admire a sunset without having that horrible vision of twisted limbs and tortured faces rising up before me. My whole being used to rebel against Nature and against Fate."

"Against God, in reality."

"Yes, it is an awful thing to own. After all, though, Granny, do you suppose that if a criminal, the worst assassin of all assassins, could, by merely willing it, make all mankind healthy and happy, do you suppose that he would refuse to do so?"

"No, I am sure he would do it."

"And yet the all powerful God will not?"

"Because He knows the end and object of the evil and of the suffering, and because He probably cannot."

Maïa was amazed at this answer.

"Because He *cannot?*" she repeated.

"Yes. He is the slave of His own plan, of the plan of the Universe. We see now that, in this plan, everything is done by continued developments, transformations, evolutions; and even by retrogressions,— never by mere will power. If God were to grant only the ten millionth part of the prayers which the inhabitants of the Earth send up to Him, He would be continually

altering His creation. If He only granted the prolongation of life for which the mothers and the women ask, He would be compelled to delay the births, in order to maintain the mathematical equilibrium of our planet."

"Why, yes, you are right," said Maïa, with a flash of comprehension in her eyes.

"You must educate your mind to consider that the Universe and the Sun were not created for the Earth, but the Earth for the Universe and the Sun."

"My intellect may be able to grasp that much."

"Then, that this world was not made for man, but man for this world."

"That is more difficult to believe."

"After that, that man is the receiver of universal forces and that, at no matter what cost, he is obliged to aid in their eternal play."

"You are giving me rather too much."

"Try to grasp all this. You would then have a conception of Life which would prevent you from arguing in the childish way you spoke just now. Most atheists use the arguments that you employed."

"I should have become an atheist if that had been possible," confessed Maïa.

"Then, too, we have neither the right nor the power of judging God. Take, for instance, that poor child, the sight of whom roused your indignation; we do not know whether she will live long. The trial, both for herself and for her parents, may be alleviated by a crowd of circumstances. She evidently comes of a rich family, for she looked well-cared for and she has a trained nurse. We often pity people who do not need our pity and we find a certain sentimental satisfaction in pitying them. About fifteen years ago, I remember

going up the cliffs at Houlgate, one morning, behind a poor woman as thin as a rake and with no shoes on her feet. She was bent double under the weight of a huge sack of potatoes. I at once began to pity her lot in life and that of all humanity. She put her burden down for a minute to rest. I wished her Good morning and began to talk to her. What do you think she told me?"

"What?"

"That she was the happiest creature in the world."

"No!" exclaimed Maïa, laughing.

"Yes, she did though. Her husband was a fisherman and she had six children. She lived just near the semaphore and she had managed to make a little garden which got the sea breeze. She was very proud of this garden and invited me to go and see it. I went with her to the top of the cliff and there I found a little roughly built cottage, surrounded with bright-coloured common flowers, and among these flowers was her little tribe of poorly dressed children with rosy cheeks. Thanks to that little home, there was happiness up there, although the place was lonely and dreary enough to give anyone the shivers."

"Granny, I believe that you will end by thinking that there is no such thing as sorrow."

"I have good reasons to know that it exists, but I am obliged to recognise that it is the salt of life."

"Well, then, there is a little too much salt in certain portions. The hand that distributed it put rather too much in, here and there."

"Not for you, at any rate," I said, by way of driving Maïa into a corner.

"Oh, of course, I am the happiest creature in the world," she said. "That goes without saying. Just

think ; I am young, free and rich. I have enough to make fifty thousand other people happy, if they could only exchange lots with me. Sorrow the salt of life!" she repeated with a little ironical laugh. " Is not that what you call *literature*, Granny?"

" No, for sorrow certainly does give Life a flavour. A proof of this is that we delight in exaggerating our troubles and those of other people. Besides that, we feel instinctively that our suffering makes us greater, that it ennobles us, as it were. We never boast of having been happier than other people, but we do boast of having suffered more."

" Yes, that is so," owned Maïa, " and it is certainly odd."

" I was talking of my new book to one of my readers, and she said: ' If you put a heroine in, I hope you will make her suffer.' "

Maïa stopped short and said in an earnest tone, as though alarmed:

" Oh, no, do not make her suffer."

" You need not be afraid," I said, smiling, " all will end well for her, I hope."

We were walking in the direction of the Grand Hotel and we arrived on the restaurant terrace as I said these words. Two tables were laid out of doors; and, as the weather was so beautiful, we sat down at one of these and ordered luncheon.

The little table was decorated with roses, and the champagne, in its silver bucket, gave a note of gaiety and refinement to the meal.

Maïa began to talk to me of Valcombe and regretted that she would soon be leaving it.

" It is something pleasant coming to an end, and one is never sure of pleasant things being repeated."

" You seem to have been walking over plenty of pessimistic weeds to-day," I said.

" Yes, such weeds seem to grow all along my path just as the flowers of optimism grow along your path."

" My optimism is composed of pessimism reasoned out," I answered. " Unless I am very much mistaken," I added, " you are just in need of the English remedy."

" What is that? "

" A change of some sort. Why do you not go for some interesting trip this winter? "

" Yes, I have thought of that. Where shall I go? To Greece — or Italy? Oh, Granny, suppose you were to go to Italy with me? "

" Why not? At times I feel, not exactly attracted, but urged to go there again."

" Do you not like Italy? "

" I have neither felt it nor understood it yet."

" I must confess that it is the same with me. I saw it by the light of my honeymoon and, as that was not very brilliant, I did not see much. I should like to go there again and see it by the light of the sun and with an open mind."

" Well, then, we might go there together on a pilgrimage by way of an *amende honorable*. When do you return to Mortin? "

" At the end of next week, when two terrible women who are now on a visit there will have gone away. The one talks from morning to night, like a machine wound up, and when she has finished she has not said anything. The other one is a kind of dragon, a sort of woman militant who has a mania for converting people and a specialty for starting all kinds of good works that never continue. Father puts up with them, because their husbands are good shots, and I always want to say

wicked things to them. They might drive me to *feminicide.*"

The smile which came to my lips on hearing this word died suddenly away, for I had just seen a man coming through the hotel gate who was no other than M. de Couzan. I watched him turn to the left and take a path, with shrubs and trees on each side of it, which led in a winding way direct to the terrace; Maïa's back was turned towards him. I ought, of course, to have warned her, but it was the first time that I had ever had the opportunity of seeing Fate coming towards the unsuspecting creature, and the novelist won the day over the friend. I watched M. de Couzan's progress and I listened, at the same time, to Maïa's words and even remarked the gay notes of her voice.

"Yes," she continued, "I assure you they give me *feminicidal* ideas. They both knew me as a child, they did not approve of my extremely modern education and they are delighted that I have turned out badly."

M. de Couzan was approaching slowly, but the distance between him and Maïa was gradually getting less and less. It seemed to me that I actually felt the play of the invisible force which was bringing them together, if only for an instant. My heart was beating wildly with excitement and Maïa continued, quite unconsciously:

"For, of course, in their opinion, I have turned out badly. They always seem to be pitying my poor mother. They have a way of being most dis—"

Maïa did not finish her word, as the sudden surprise took her speech away. Her husband had just appeared at the foot of the stone steps as though from a trap door. She blushed violently, not just to the roots of her hair, as we generally say, but beyond the roots

of her hair. The pupils of her eyes dilated and her lips trembled, as she watched him coming up in our direction.

We were sitting at the end of the terrace and Maïa was at the corner of the balustrade, with her back to the light. M. de Couzan was evidently deep in thought, for he did not see us until he was quite near and he saw me first.

"Pierre de Coulevain!" he exclaimed, with an expression of pleasure that was most flattering.

He took off his hat and held out his hand, and then glanced at my companion.

The shock, for which I had been waiting, took place. The man turned pale and his face became rigid. The woman threw her head back, with a little gesture of defiance, her eyes blinked, she tried to smile, but a nervous grimace was the only result of her efforts. When their eyes met there was more curiosity than hostility in them. Then came one of those psychical silences for a second, through which one seems to hear the beat of Life. M. de Couzan recovered almost instantaneously and addressed me:

"Are you taking the waters here?" he asked, in a rather husky voice.

"No, I am here for the day only. I am perching at Lausanne."

"At Lausanne. I am taking my mother there next week. Where are you staying?"

"At the Hôtel Beau-Séjour."

"We are putting up at the Richemont. If you will allow me I will come and call."

"I shall be delighted."

"Thanks."

He kissed my hand, grasping it in a rather nervous

way and, after bowing to Maïa, went into the restaurant. I was thankful that he did bow to her and, somehow, I had the impression that, in that meeting, he came off conqueror.

"That was odd, was it not?" said the young wife in a low voice. "Quite theatrical!"

"Quite life-like, you might say," I corrected.

"It made me lose the thread of my discourse. What was I talking about?"

"About Mortin."

"Oh, yes, and my mother's guests. Well, I am waiting until they are safely back in their respective castles before returning to the paternal roof. We shall then have a very pleasant little house party. There will be the Bries, the Aurannes perhaps, a few sportsmen, Uncle, and Pierre de Coulevain."

"Impossible, this year!"

"I accept no excuse. I shall fetch you at the station when you arrive in Paris and I shall take you straight to Normandy. I want you to know Father and Uncle, the only two men I admire."

"The only ones?"

"Alas, yes."

A suspicious little blush accompanied these words.

M. de Couzan was lunching inside the restaurant. He had chosen a table to the right and the door was open. I could not see him, but I could tell where he was by the coming and going of the waiters. Thanks to Maïa's voice and to the flush on her cheeks, I was sure that she could see her husband. I was inwardly delighted to find that she was affected in this way by his presence.

"Do your parents entertain many people in the country?" I asked.

"No, Father goes there for rest and peace and he likes to have an agreeable time. We are very careful whom we invite. You see when French women are away from home they do not know what to do with themselves nor how to entertain themselves. They do not care for walking, they do not read very much and so they depend upon their hosts all the time. In country houses where all kinds of entertainments are arranged, it is more easy to be hospitable, but in more serious houses like ours, we have to know people well."

"Three years ago," I said, "I was invited to a house near you. Some Scottish friends had taken it and it was a kind of cottage standing in an orchard. There were several rooms on the ground floor and some bed-rooms that were like attics. They had chosen this rustic abode, partly because of its originality and partly for the sake of giving their friends the famous 'change,' combined with a visit to Normandy. The bed-rooms were occupied during the whole season. The guests went for walks in the neighbouring woods, for automobile drives, and they lunched sometimes in Rouen, Vernon, or even in Paris. The whole house was decorated with flowers and every evening we all dressed for dinner, played bridge afterwards and then had music. The old Scottish ballads were sung and could be heard far enough away, as the windows were all open. I remember one which was a great favourite, *Prince Charlie, will ye no come back again?* It was all most curious and charming. The peasants were rather suspicious of these foreigners who had such extraordinary ways and customs. Only a few yards away, there was a magnificent château, which looked uninhabited in the day-time and most forbidding at night. In reality one wing was inhabited. The owners of it only invited

members of their family and then gave a few dinners to their provincial neighbours. I felt quite humiliated, as this kind of hospitality was such a contrast to that of the people with whom I was staying."

"Well, you will not be humiliated at Mortin. You will see the pretty blue smoke coming out of all its chimneys."

"Ah, then, Mortin shall have a good mark," I said, smiling. The door of the restaurant suddenly opened and a young man appeared on the terrace.

"Madame Lasserre!" he exclaimed, in a tone of agreeable surprise. He came at once to our table and kissed Maïa's hand.

"Monsieur de Berghes, the *esteemed* attaché of our legation at Athens," said Maïa, drolly, employing the formula of the society papers by way of introduction. "Pierre de Coulevain," she continued, addressing the young man. "You see," she said, "we are entertaining each other."

We exchanged the usual commonplaces and the young man paid a few compliments to the author. An ugly suspicion then crossed my mind. This was the French attaché at Athens and Maïa had proposed a visit to Greece.

"Sit down," she said to him, "and if possible, tell me where you have sprung from."

"I have just come from my grandmother's," he replied, "she is staying here."

"I am glad to see that she has not eaten you up."

"No, because I am not Little Red Riding-Hood and also because wolves do not eat each other."

"Oh, but they do, you ignorant man. Naturalists have discovered that sometimes they do. That is another proverb which is wrong."

"And proverbs are supposed to be the wisdom of nations."

"Science is now manufacturing fresh wisdom for the nations. I cannot talk philosophy, though, now. We will reserve it for another time. Where are you going?"

"To Geneva."

"We are expecting you at Valcombe next week, you know."

"I am not likely to forget that. I shall find you there still, I hope?"

There was a note of anxiety in the young man's voice that did not escape me.

"You will have that pleasure," replied Maïa, with a coquettish little smile. "You will have a fresh experience of my skill at billiards."

"I do not know any woman who plays like Madame de Lasserre," he said, turning to me.

"I did not know that she was so accomplished," I answered.

"I am the pupil of my father and of my uncle. They took no end of trouble to train my eye for the game. As to the stroke, that came natural to me."

The coffee was now brought in and Maïa offered a cup to M. de Berges.

"No, thank you," he said, "I have not yet lunched. I am reserving that by way of diversion for the boat."

Madame Lasserre put on a comic look of horror.

"Do you mean to say, that, at your age, you lunch on Lake Leman instead of diving into its blue depths?"

"Please forgive me. I should not be allowed to bathe on the way."

"You would be allowed to write sonnets like Lamartine and others have done."

"Alas, neither heaven nor earth could make a poet capable of writing verses of me. I am only a prose poet."

"Ah, you are a prose poet?"

"Have you never discovered that?"

"Never!"

"That is very discouraging."

"But I do not wish to encourage you at all."

"I am quite aware of that," remarked M. de Berghes with a forced laugh.

Maïa rose to the occasion and appeared to enjoy flirting with the unfortunate young attaché. She was spurred on, no doubt, by the presence of M. de Couzan and the consciousness of her power, and she was not only brilliant and witty, but somewhat daring. I noticed several times that she seemed rather uneasy, for she blushed when the young man glanced at her after one of her provoking speeches and she put on the 'touch-me-not' look which she usually adopts. My suspicions increased, and I examined M. de Berghes more closely.

He was very dark, of medium height and elegant figure. He had strong, refined features and very fine eyes. He was a typical aristocratic diplomat and the living antithesis of M. de Couzan. This did not reassure me at all, quite the reverse. I began to wonder whether this meeting at Evian had been arranged. Then, too, this flirtation in the presence of the man who had been the husband, and who, according to the mysterious laws of Nature, still was, perhaps, the husband, caused me some uneasiness.

My psychological curiosity was cruelly tantalised. I was sorry to be missing some of the effects of this rare scene. In spite of myself, I kept looking towards the

restaurant and I probably showed my impatience. My hostess noticed this and, with the tact of a society woman, she turned the conversation in such a way that I was obliged to take part in it.

"It must be most interesting to see the phenomenon of the Renaissance in a country like Greece," I said.

"Most interesting," replied M. de Berghes, "and, in spite of the ignorance of the masses, this Renaissance is making rapid strides. There are forces of atavism, intuitive and psychical forces, in this nation which are of great service to it. Everything is beginning to flourish once more, art, literature, science and commerce. Unfortunately politics interfere greatly with the wonderful efforts that are being made. In Greece, there are neither monarchists, republicans, socialists nor anarchists —"

"Why, it is Paradise then!" exclaimed Madame Lasserre.

"No, for there are as many different parties as there are members of Parliament."

"Really?"

"Yes; and all these different parties think of nothing but demolishing each other, or of holding their own; and they only trouble about the interests of Greece when these help forward their own private ambition. The Prince Royal is working hard, fortunately, in organising an army for the protection and safety of the country."

"What a curious thing," I said, musing aloud, quite unintentionally.

"What is curious?" asked Maïa.

"The American friends, with whom I spent a month, left me at Lausanne to go to Greece. They were to go by the Engadine and Italy and are now there. While

they are visiting Athens, Delphi and Olympia I make the acquaintance of the Greek mind, in my quiet hotel, in the persons of a writer, an officer, a doctor, a politician and three pretty women. In the morning, I receive a post card with a view of the Parthenon, the Acropolis and the Thesean temple, and in the evening I talk of modern Greece. A well-known writer, D. Bikélas, has given me his novel, *Louki Laras*, and his Grecian stories. They are translated into French and magnificently illustrated by Ralli. Both books are charming and of Doric purity and simplicity."

"I am very glad you have that impression," said M. de Berghes. "When I am in Greece, it always seems to me that the people have the characteristics of their three chief styles of architecture. It seems to me that there are Doric, Ionic and Corinthian mentalities. That of the young generation seems to me to be Corinthian. This is perhaps just an effect of imagination."

"No, I do not think it is the effect of imagination. Those primordial lines might very well exteriorise not only the Grecian mind, but the human mind also."

"These might convince you further," said the young man, taking out of his pocket a yellow envelope. "They are photographs of the Olympian Games, which I asked one of my friends to send. France, as you know, was victorious in these games."

M. de Berghes showed us a photograph of the *stadium* reconstructed, by a wealthy patriot, on the very foundations of the *stadium* of Pericles. On the marble tiers of the Pentelicon was a compact crowd, a modern crowd; women in immense hats and men in coats, straw or felt hats. In the open space, in the centre of the beautiful antique lines, the thin degenerate bodies of our twentieth

century athletes, wearing hideous jerseys, stood out in relief. On paper, the sight was grotesque, and I wondered what it must have been in the brilliant light of Greece, which must be the same now as formerly.

"It is very wonderful," I said, "to see Providence take up again the threads that we might have thought were lost for ever and weave a new design."

"Yes, but what is the use when the new design is not as good as the old one?" objected Maïa.

"It is not in our power to appreciate the worth or the use of it," I replied.

"Look at this," said M. de Berghes; "it is a reproduction of the Cariatides of the Acropolis and it seems to me to be perfect."

"Oh, what fine figures, and what beautiful lines and graceful folds!" exclaimed Maïa, with unfeigned enthusiasm, passing the post card to me. "The women Cariatides always inspire me with pity, they always look so sad."

"I always pity the men Cariatides," I said.

"Oh, Granny!"

"Bravo, Pierre de Coulevain!"

"Yes," I said, "their efforts seem to be more painful. Their faces and their bodies look more tormented."

"Madame Lasserre," said the young diplomat, "you must come and see the Cariatides in their proper frame and under their own skies. Why not this winter?"

Just at this moment M. de Couzan appeared in the doorway of the restaurant. I saw that the attaché did not know him. The baron lighted his cigar, crossed the terrace, bowed and then went down the stone steps with a deliberation that appeared to me intentional. I smiled to myself as I noticed that he, too, was wearing

grey. His suit was of rough cloth, he had on a soft felt hat and long stockings. The shooting suit showed up his well-built figure to perfection.

Maïa watched him for a few seconds and then said mechanically: "Yes, why should I not go to Greece this winter?"

She was quiet for a moment and then continued: "Is there any human beauty to be seen there?"

"Not in social circles. Among the lower classes, and particularly among the peasants, classical features are to be found and bodies such as Praxiteles would not have disdained."

M. de Berghes showed us some photographs of soldiers wearing caps with long tassels, embroidered coats, and shoes with red pompons.

"These are a few specimens of that famous Evzones regiment which guards the frontier."

"But they must surely have a regiment of laundresses to get up all those little pleats!" exclaimed Maïa.

"It is quite possible they have, and the Evzones laundresses are not to be pitied, for these men are as handsome as Hermes."

"Fancy our soldiers wearing that costume," said Maïa, amused at the thought of it.

"How cold their faces look," I remarked.

"Oh, the characteristic of people and things in Greece is coldness, but it is a brilliant coldness," said M. Berghes.

"I have learnt something about Greece, thanks to you," I said, handing the photographs back to the young man. "I am wondering why my thoughts and the thoughts of my friends should suddenly be occupied by Greece, a country about which I have scarcely thought ten times since my childhood," I continued.

"It seems as though the association of ideas exists with Providence just as it does with us."

"Perhaps you will make up your mind to accompany me to Athens and to Corfu, this winter, Granny," said Maïa.

"I think not," I answered rather drily.

A bell now rang on the lake.

"That is my boat," said M. de Berghes, rising. "I am so glad to have met you here," he added. "Remember me to all friends at Valcombe. And next week I am to be defeated on the green baize — If only that were all — "

He spoke with deep feeling and I noticed that he kissed the hand that was held out to him very fervently.

"A delightful man, that Berghes,"— said Maïa, as soon as he had gone away.

I felt slightly reassured, for no woman would have spoken in that way of the man she loved.

"One of your admirers, I suppose?" I said.

"Yes, and the least commonplace of them."

"And he adores you?"

"I am afraid so."

"Afraid? It did not seem as though you were."

Maïa blushed and laughed.

"I am not in the habit of acting as I did just now. I do not know what took possession of me."

"I do, though."

"Well, if you do know, do not tell me — Ah, here is our auto. The chauffeur will have seen to everything here."

A few minutes later we were driving along the magnificent road which skirts the lake in the direction of Meillerie. We were both of us silent. I watched my

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companion and noticed that she had a fixed look and that her profile was very rigid. Her eloquent eyelashes kept blinking nervously and the corners of her mouth quivered. I felt sure that this meeting with M. de Couzan had taken effect and I would not for the world have diminished this effect by a word. Just beyond Meillerie, the chauffeur took an uphill road that led to a delightful country-looking part of the world. We passed through some very picturesque villages, but they were horribly dirty. There was not a trace of any attempt to beautify the houses and there was no sign of any care for hygiene. The fountains looked dirty and a state of barbaric ignorance was very evident.

I could not help comparing them with the Swiss villages near Baden. Rustic life there has a sort of elegance about it. The peasant realises that he is a citizen, as he has received his share of the benefits of progress and civilisation at school. The faces of many of the women and children, under their mops of light or dark hair, were pleasant and intelligent looking and I kept saying to myself: "What a pity! What a pity!"

We got out at a pretty little hamlet and then took a narrow path leading up to the summit. Very soon we came to a fairly clean little house, evidently an inn, judging by the dry branch hanging out over the door. A woman was seated at the threshold peeling chestnuts. A sudden memory came to me and I stopped short.

"Oh, Maïa," I said, "have you ever tasted coffee and chestnuts together?"

"What a horrible mixture," she answered, laughingly.

"It is a specialty peculiar to Savoy and a very good mixture, I can assure you; take my word for it." I went up to the woman, who was watching us without ceasing her occupation.

"Could you give us some chestnuts and some coffee with hot milk?" I asked her.

"Ah, Madame knows that?" she asked.

"Yes, it is excellent," I answered. "But can you make good coffee?" I continued.

"I should think I can," she replied. "My husband knows what is good to eat and drink, and if his coffee is not up to the mark, he lets me hear about it."

"And quite right, too," I said, by way of consolation.

"Ah, Madame thinks so?"

"Certainly I do. What is your husband's trade?"

"He is a boatman. There's nothing here but chestnuts, stones and fish. We've got no vines like they have on the other side of the lake."

"They are no better off than you, though, on the other side."

"No, perhaps not."

"Well, will you boil some chestnuts for us and make some coffee and give us some hot milk?"

"Yes," replied the woman, with a broad smile.

"How long will it take?" I asked.

"About three quarters of an hour."

"Good," I said.

"Have you come in a *mobile*?" asked our hostess.

"Yes, and we are going on farther up. We will come down again at four o'clock, and we must be down at Évian for the half-past five boat. Lay our table outside," I added, on seeing a table under a huge beech tree.

"Yes, Madame."

We started away, but before we had gone away many steps, I turned back. "Do not forget," I said to the woman, "that the chestnuts must be boiled in plenty

of water in their second skins and that you must not spare the salt."

"Ah, Madame knows the secret?" she replied, very much surprised.

"What an idea, Granny," remarked Maïa, as we turned away.

"You can tell me what you think of my idea presently," I replied.

We continued our up-hill road for some little time until we arrived at a wonderful grove of chestnut trees. The sun shone through the wide openings, lighting up the grass with its golden patches, giving iridescent colours to the spiders' webs, whilst millions of insects were dancing their last dances in its rays. A whole multitude of little lives that were just ending were still murmuring and all this produced a soft and harmonious noise. Maïa and I went on talking, but our conversation was broken by long silences and by exclamations of admiration. I noticed that she walked along with her head bent and her eyes fixed on the ground. Suddenly she stopped short and, with an expression almost severe on her face, she said: "Granny, I hope you had nothing to do with this meeting and that it was really chance."

"Nothing whatever," I answered. "It was as much a chance meeting as that with M. de Berghes."

"Ah, I see that we were both suspicious," said Maïa, laughing. "I certainly suspected Pierre de Coulevain."

"And I a certain pretty woman that I know."

"We were both wrong, and I am very glad," said Maïa, putting her arm through mine and pressing it affectionately.

"I must confess though," I continued, "that I had

hoped to be present when you both met, and I will confess, too, that I saw him coming in the distance."

Maïa drew her arm away and said in a reproachful tone: "I have the novelist to thank, I suppose. You wanted to witness a psychological shock."

"And a physiological one, too," I answered calmly.

"And how do you think we came through the ordeal of these two shocks?" she asked, in an ironical way, but with an anxious expression in her eyes.

"Perfectly," I answered. "I wanted to see you together, so that I might know something of your real sentiments."

"And are you satisfied now?"

"Fairly."

A faint blush came over Maïa's face.

"What does that 'fairly' mean?"

"You will know later on, if things turn out as I think they will. Tell me, though, have you never met Monsieur de Couzan since your divorce?"

"Face to face, no. He has been in Belgium and I have been travelling. We are no longer in the same circle. Just lately though, he has been crossing my path occasionally. I have seen him rather frequently, at the Automobile show, at the *Concours Hippique*, at the Races and the theatre. I have seen him looking at me several times through his opera glass, but if I had ever imagined that—"

"I want to ask you something, which is perhaps rather indiscreet, may I?"

"Yes, ask me anything, Granny."

"It is extremely indiscreet."

"Well, it will be all the more amusing."

"When you suddenly met Monsieur de Couzan, did you realise that he had been your husband?"

Maïa blushed violently and her eyes blinked. She hesitated for a minute, as though to think over my question, but, in reality, I fancy to control her emotion.

"Whether I realised that he had been my husband?" she repeated. She then threw her head back and said, with an accent of triumph:

"No, I did not. You will not believe me, perhaps?"

"Yes, I do. We frequently forget for a moment certain things that we have lived through."

"Yes, thank Heaven. This morning, though, I had no time to think of anything. I had the impression of an inward whirlwind, of something disagreeable, and that was all."

"Disagreeable — was it really disagreeable?"

"It is only natural that it should have been. Monsieur de Couzan and I did not divorce by way of amusement. We had very good reasons for what we did."

"Your misunderstanding must have been due to your ignorance of Life. How old were you when you married?"

"I was nineteen and he was twenty-seven."

"You were too young, considering how you had been brought up."

"Yes, I was very fresh, morally and physically — as fresh as this," she continued, picking up a bright, golden chestnut, in its half open shell.

"You are still," I said, smiling at the comparison.  
"That is your great charm."

Maïa shrugged her pretty shoulders and then said, half angrily: "Oh, no, I am like those dusty old chestnuts now that we see in the sacks for sale."

"How could your parents let you marry so young, when they adored you as they did?"

"Because I wanted to marry, and I wanted to marry

for the sake of being free. I wanted to try those little wings that I felt in my shoulders."

"And yet you must have been very happy in the family nest."

"Happy," she repeated; "you are quite mistaken. I was not happy. I will explain and you will then understand."

"Let us sit down," I said, feeling sure that the confidence I had been working for was now ready. We soon found a lovely glade with a view of distant mountains and some gleams of the blue lake through the leaves that were turning yellow. As we were in Savoy, and not in Switzerland, there was no bench for us, so we sat down on a tree that had recently been cut down.

"I told you," continued Maïa, "of that curious antagonism which always urged me to do the opposite of what my mother wanted. Instead of this disappearing as I grew older, it became worse and worse. It seems as though my natural instinct were to make people who love me suffer. I have often wondered if this were not so."

"It certainly is with many people," I said, "but I do not understand such an inclination with so generous a nature as yours. As far as your mother and you were concerned, it must merely have been that your mentality is so different."

"I think you are right, especially as this antagonism was always with regard to ideas and not to sentiments. With Mother, for instance, religiosity was innate and with me it was absent. Then, too, unluckily, if I prayed for fine weather, it was sure to rain, and if I prayed for an animal to get well, it was sure to die. I remember once, praying ardently for a certain yellow

cat to come back home and it never returned. All that shook my confidence, you understand."

"What a mistake it is to inspire children with such familiarity with God. It may, of course, produce faith, but it is much more likely to lead to atheism and indifference. When we are grown up the idea of God so often remains associated with all this childishness of our early days. We are apt then either to abjure God or to continue invoking Him for foolish things. As for women, they are capable of praying to Him to help them to find a purse that they have lost — or a heart."

"And, of course, they invoke St. Anthony of Padua, as their intermediary," added Maïa, laughing.

"Yes, some of them have the modesty to do that," I said.

"And some creatures even dare to say to God, just as they might to one of their comrades: 'If you will do this for me; I will do this or that for you.' Only imagine making a bargain like that with the Eternal God. Thanks to these childish promises we have some of our most beautiful churches, our masterpieces of architecture. It is quite true that 'all things work together,' but there is something barbaric and grotesque in these childish bargains with God. We give children a completely wrong and ridiculous idea of Him. I once found a certain grandmother of my acquaintance in tears. She had said to her little grandchild, probably for the millionth time: 'God will punish you!' The child had answered, 'He is an old father beat-the-children, then!' This blasphemy had caused her the deepest grief. She considered the spirit of the times was responsible for it, or the republic, or even the government. It was her own fault, of course. She had held God up as a terror. We do not yet know

how to make God real to children. It is no good attempting to show Him to the child in a metaphysical heaven, nor yet in books, but on earth, quite near, in the living book of Nature. We ought to show Him to the child as his Creator, as the Creator of light and darkness, of flowers and thorns, of useful and obnoxious animals, as the source of joy and sorrow. As the child's mind develops, it would then be impossible for him to either deny or abjure God, unless he were either blind or an idiot."

"I should have adored and loved a God like that, Granny, without any effort and for ever. I evidently had not any fibres that responded when it was a question of metaphysics. The God of the Old Testament, of the Gospel and of the Catechism did not appeal to me and, to be quite frank, I have never believed in that God. The joys of Paradise, such as they were portrayed to me, did not tempt me, and the tortures of hell and of purgatory never alarmed me. I used to say my prayers, every morning and night, with as much feeling as a gramophone. I was bored to death at Church, and, after any long religious ceremony, I used to go home in a nervous state for the whole day after. The best of parents are frequently veritable tortures for their children, and simply from a want of comprehension."

"Did not your confirmation arouse any religious fervour in you?"

"None at all, and Heaven knows, I was carefully prepared for it. Two whole years of catechism, sermons, silent meditation and church-going. I was spared nothing. When I think of all this spiritual warming-up, I often wonder whether it is not imprudent to excite the psychical forces in a child and particularly in a girl?"

"I used to blame this proceeding and I used even to

call it immoral, but I now think it helps to develop certain souls and I believe that Nature requires it."

"Oh, Granny!"

"Yes, it acts on them like electricity on plants. It gives them different shades and helps them to blossom."

"Yes, some of my friends used to have fits of ecstatic fervour and feel the need of sacrificing themselves. They would have liked to be martyrs even. I always remained quite refractory."

"You were not precocious, perhaps, as far as the senses were concerned."

"No, not at all. My physical activity had been encouraged, thanks to tennis and riding, and this had kept me as pure as a baby."

"That was just the reason."

"I remember, the day of my first communion, trying my best to get into a holy frame of mind. I tried to feel something, for that was the one desire we all had. The only impression I had was that of the cold fingers of the priest touching my lips when he gave me the host and that impression of coldness has always remained with me."

"It is a proof, anyhow, that you must have been more or less sensibilised."

"Yes, but not in a spiritual sense. Mother's first trouble after this was my indifference and, later on, my incredulity. Sacred history and religion only interested me when I saw what I believed to be contradictions and flagrant impossibilities. Most of the children of the present generation would see these contradictions and impossibilities, but my poor mother was obliged to argue things out with me which she had always accepted blindly. When she could find no way of supporting her arguments without making me doubt God's goodness

and justice, she would look down, for she could not meet my gaze. This was always a sure sign that she was vanquished. I was not long in discovering the fact and it gave me the most wicked pleasure. She used to come and brush my hair every night when I went to bed and she kept this up until I married. It was generally then that my combative instinct was roused."

"Perhaps the brushing had something to do with it," I said, smiling.

"Whatever may have been the cause, we certainly had the most impossible conversations. I am only sorry that they were not taken down."

"It is a pity, for they would probably have shown us just where the spirit of the times clashes with the ideas of former days."

"It was generally Mother who, quite unconsciously, gave me the themes for my objections. I remember, once, for instance, she blamed me for leaving my money and jewelry about. I was about sixteen at that time. 'We never ought to put temptation in the way of servants, because we do not know whether they will have the strength to resist,' she said. 'Ah,' I replied, promptly seizing the occasion for an argument, 'then you think it is wrong to tempt people?' 'Very wrong,' she answered, giving herself away completely. 'How can you think then that God tempted our first parents, especially when He must have known their weakness?' There was silence for a minute and I saw, through the glass, that Mother was looking down and that her lips were twitching nervously. Presently she looked up again and said quietly:

"It is not for me to judge God. I believe what the Church teaches."

"If the Church ordered you to believe that Joshua

made the sun stand still, should you believe it?' There was another silence and the brushing became jerky and rough.

"The Church would not order me to believe that. We are not even commanded to believe in the miracles," said Mother at last.

"But supposing it did order you to believe in these things?" I persisted. "I am quite sure that it did order its faithful followers to believe in these things, when Galileo proclaimed his startling discovery."

There was a still longer silence, for a very fierce inward battle was probably being waged.

"I should then believe them," said my mother, at last in a decided and defiant tone, "because the Church could not be—deceived—"

"Nor yet deceive us," I finished ironically.

"Nor yet deceive us," repeated my Mother, imperceptibly.

"Science is deceived every day," she continued, "and it deceives us."

"When the Church is mistaken, no one can verify things, the Church itself cannot," I said, for I was thoroughly exasperated. "When Science makes any mistake it is soon aware of it, it owns its mistake and starts once more in search of the truth."

Mother was now furious.

"Nothing *proves* that the earth turns round the sun," she said.

"Nothing *proves*," I said quite logically, "that Adam and Eve ever existed."

There was an unbroken silence after this and I was treated very coldly until the next morning.

These discussions took place every day and, as I read more, they became more serious and more unyield-

ing on either side. The things I touched on were so sacred for Mother that the objections I raised made her righteously angry, and I used to see flashes of something like hatred in her kind eyes."

"Oh, no!" I said.

"Yes," insisted Maïa, "I can assure you that she would have detested me if she had been able to. I used to go to lectures at the Convent of the Assumption, in the Rue de Lübeck. The professors were excellent, but they knew that we belonged to orthodox families and that we were just so many little geese intended for the usual society life, so that they taught us in as superficial a way as possible. The lectures on History and Natural Science were more conscientious and, without appearing to do so, they led us into the current of modern ideas. What I learnt was a revelation to me. The age of the world dated far, far back then. I had always been taught to think of antiquity and of paganism as negligible quantities, as something barbarous, but they stood out now luminous and grand with men like Plato, Pythagoras and Marcus Aurelius. I discovered that goodness and humaneness, the two greatest virtues, had existed on our earth before Christianity. I learnt that the Christian and Catholic Middle Ages had invented tortures, by the side of which crucifixion was mild. I discovered that there had not only been martyrs for religion, but that religion had made martyrs of people. I was wildly indignant and my poor Mother had a very bad time. With every fresh discovery I would appeal to her —'How could the Church ever have found in the Gospel, which is such a beautiful book, a single word to justify its stakes and its excommunications?'

"I praised up the Gospel," confessed Maïa, "which I really did not understand at that time, and which I

never read, but I made use of it as a set-off against the abuses of Catholicism. Oh, I was not always very conscientious."

"What did your Mother answer?" I asked.

"That all those things were errors of the times. I did not, of course, fail to remark that I thought the Church could not make mistakes."

"They were political mistakes," I put in.

"The time came when I refused absolutely to accept the story of Adam and Eve except as a legend. The story of the creation of the world, according to Genesis, was our usual theme of battle, and Mother frequently came off badly on this subject. I remember, one evening, we were talking of atavism. A friend of ours said that it gave him quite a start to see himself in the glass unconsciously buttoning his shirt front, as this was a habit of his father's, and his father had died some years ago. Mother then told us that one of her school friends always confused *d* and *b* and that later on her little girl had the same difficulty with these two letters.

"Well, then," I remarked, "Adam and Eve must have been the only creatures who had no atavism."

"Of course they had no atavism," affirmed Mother, unsuspiciously.

"How do you account then for that instinct of disobedience which led to the first sin?"

Mother's face turned crimson to her very hair. Father coughed and our friend thought it very amusing. Uncle, who has a special talent for saving the situation, remarked, in a jesting tone: "The earthly Paradise was closed, my child, it is no use your trying to get into it again. The serpent has multiplied and there are millions of them now."

"That was always the way my family tried to silence me and to turn aside my awkward questions."

"What did your governess answer?"

"Miss Lang always refused to argue about things which should not be discussed. She was very tactful. She knew exactly what might be expected from me as far as religious belief and church-going were concerned. As to Mother all this caused what you term 'the wall' to come between us. She could never talk to me about her heavenly hopes, her saints, her prayers and her indulgences. I could not talk to her about my heroes and tell her of my delight each time some fresh veil fell away."

"Did you never think of the subject about which all girls are supposed to think?" I asked inquisitively.

"I did more than think, for, when I was only about fourteen, I experienced a sentiment which was very near akin to love."

"Really? And for whom?"

"For Uncle Henri. I simply adored him. His very presence made me quite happy. When he went away I was heart-broken and when he came back again, I was wild with joy. He little imagines the happiness which the sound of his rich voice gave me and the bliss I felt when he stroked my hair. Some day I will tell him. One day, Miss Lang had been to the house of one of my friends to fetch me back home and, on the way, she told me that Uncle had returned unexpectedly, after an absence of six months. That was quite enough for me. Urged by some irresistible impulse, I left my governess in the road and rushed home as fast as my legs would carry me. I was conscious of some inner force which needed wings. This affection for Uncle 'kept my

heart warm,' as you say. It certainly kept it warm and pure during my girlhood."

"At what age did you come out?"

"I was about seventeen and a half. Mother hoped that, by supplying me with fresh diversions, she would prevent my continuing speculations which she considered dangerous. For the first few months, I was rather intoxicated by my social success, by the discovery of my feminine power and by my flirtations. My thoughts, however, soon began to return to more serious subjects and I should have liked to discuss a hundred different interesting questions with one man or another.

"The younger men only paid me silly compliments, though, and the older ones did not take me seriously. I was furious. I heard political, social and humanitarian subjects being discussed every day and all these conversations gave me all kinds of ideas. Whenever I suggested any schemes for certain improvements, I was requested to keep my ideas for 'later on.'

"Mother is very generous and, like a true French woman, she does an enormous amount of good quietly. She let me help her in some of her good works; but that was not enough for me. I was longing to come into contact with human misery. I felt a kind of fascination for the dark gulf which I knew existed. As a marriageable daughter I certainly must have been an exercise for my Mother. I expressed my opinions without being asked for them, and I was lavish in my criticisms of the routine and prejudices of former days. I delighted in shocking certain old ladies and orthodox people. If it had not been for Uncle, I should no doubt have done something desperate. Loti amuses me with his pity for the 'disillusioned Turkish women' who

could nevertheless escape for promenades and invite him to tea in old Stamboul. French girls are more closely guarded than that. They could not invite him to any little fête in old Paris. It is a good thing they cannot, too. I had never been out alone in my life, of course. My greatest desire was to be able to go out alone, to wander about in the streets and to be able to stop at the shop-windows. I once asked Mother to let me have the carriage to go to see one of my friends who was ill. She refused, 'because the concierge might think it strange.' I fancy this little incident was responsible, in a way, for the change in my lot. I began to think of marriage as an open door that led to freedom and to Life, and I rushed towards it, without troubling any more about my ideals and my dreams of masculine perfection. Among the suitors approved by my parents, there were two whom I rather liked, Baron de Couzan and the Marquis de S——. I could not decide which I preferred of the two. I wrote my name 'Maïa de Couzan' and 'Maïa de S——', and I looked at them both critically, with my head on one side, as I might have done when deciding on the purchase of some gim-crack or an article of dress. The former gave me an impression of strength and substantiality, the latter sounded better on account of the title of Marquis. One morning, as I was walking along the Boulevard Malesherbes, carefully guarded, of course, by Miss Lang, we saw a horse fall down. The occupant of the cab sprang out and I recognised M. de Couzan. He helped the driver to unharness the horse and to get him on to his feet again. He then stroked the poor animal, rubbed its legs and tried to calm it. After this he got into the cab again and drove away. I had made my governess stand still, as I wanted to watch the little

scene. This little act of humaneness turned the scales in favour of Pierre —.”

Maïa blushed at the sound of the name she had thus unconsciously pronounced and then continued:

“ Of Monsieur de Couzan. Besides this he was Uncle’s candidate. When I marry again, I shall be careful to look out for a different touchstone.”

“ Ah, you see now,” I said triumphantly, “ how true it is that ‘ everything works together.’ It was a horse falling down that was to help in leading you to your fate. For this to have taken place, this movement had to be combined with the movement that took you to Boulevard Malesherbes.”

“ I wish I could believe that,” answered Maïa, finger-ing the veins of a large chestnut leaf. “ It would be a relief at any rate to think that I had lived out one of God’s plans.”

“ You most certainly have.”

“ And this plan was to end in the way you know? ”

“ Nothing ends in this world,” I said. “ Was there no indication,” I continued, “ to make you foresee that Monsieur de Couzan and you were unsuitable to each other? ”

“ There was nothing at all. The curious part was that I determined to study his character very carefully and to break off my engagement if I discovered anything that seemed likely to prevent my being happy. Well, I did not study anything at all. He talked well, he liked sports and he appeared to be intelligent. I did not trouble about anything else. When he was not there I thought of all kinds of questions to ask him and of all kinds of traps, by which I should discover all about him. As soon as he appeared, I never thought about all this. He was always rather ill at ease, evi-

dently in love, and that flattered me, so that in the intoxication of my triumph, I forgot the examination I had intended him to pass. Then, too, it is not easy to talk when there is always a chaperone present, as one is never natural. After three months' engagement, I really knew him very little, so that I was absolutely irresponsible as regards my marriage."

"And did you find out immediately that you were unsuited to each other?" I asked, feeling intuitively that the whole knot of the difficulty lay there.

Maïa was somewhat embarrassed. She lowered her eyes and her mouth twitched nervously.

"Immediately—or at least very soon," she said briefly, throwing away the leaf that she had torn into fringes. "By the end of the year, Monsieur de Couzan had begun gambling!"

"Gambling!" I exclaimed. "Oh, Maïa, are you sure?"

"Am I sure? That is good. Within two years he had left a good sum of money in the hands of the Queen of Spades. This was fortunate for me, as if he had not had this taste, about which by the by, he had never spoken, my parents would have put all the obstacles they could have found in the way of our divorce."

"A gambler!" I said; "well, he certainly has none of the characteristics of one. He looks you straight in the face and the expression of his mouth is decided. I thought I was a good physiognomist. Does he still gamble?"

Maïa shrugged her shoulders.

"I am not well up in his ways and doings now. They no longer concern me, thank Heaven."

We were silent for a minute and then Maïa turned to me and said, with a little smile:

"Well, Granny, it seems to me I have been confessing to-day. Have I interested you?"

"You have no idea how much you have interested me."

"So much the better." She looked at the little watch she was wearing on her arm and then announced that it was time to be returning to the little cottage for our coffee and chestnuts. We started and, as we were strolling along in the chestnut grove, I noticed the butterflies flying about haphazard. "Look at those poor little things," I said. "Have you ever noticed that the Autumn butterflies are always alone?"

"No, but perhaps they are the divorced butterflies. I must be an Autumn butterfly then," she added.

"You are only a chrysalis," I said, "please do not be offended."

"Thank you, Granny."

On arriving at our destination, we found the table laid under the tree I had chosen. The cloth was coarse, with a red border, the bowls were as thick as those that are generally given to cats. There were two silver spoons and a sugar basin. Everything was quite clean and inviting. The woman brought a salad bowl of steaming chestnuts cooked to perfection and a brown coffee pot, of the kind that are known as "filters" now and that have become *chic*, thanks to their name. The milk was boiled and looked like cream. I poured the coffee and then gave Maïa instructions.

"Take off your gloves," I said, "peel your chestnuts without a knife and then put them into your coffee."

"Horrors!" she exclaimed, laughing. She immediately set to work though, crying out when she burnt her fingers with the hot nuts. She had soon filled her bowl and then, with a little grimace of disgust, she tasted her coffee. "Why, it is exquisite, Granny!" she exclaimed. The woman was still there, with her hand on her hip, probably waiting for a compliment. "Your coffee is perfect," I said, and her common face at once beamed with satisfaction.

"That's right," she said. "When my husband grumbles again, I shall tell him that the ladies from Paris are not as particular as he is."

"It is delicious though," said Maïa. "The flavour of the coffee brings out that of the chestnuts and the flavour of the chestnuts brings out that of the coffee."

"Yes, that is just it. The last time that I tasted this was forty years ago; at the house of the daughter of one of our old servants at Roche in Savoy."

"Forty years without eating what you know to be so good?"

"Alas, yes. If I had been told then that the next time I should taste coffee and chestnuts like this would be in Savoy, near Lake Leman, that my companion would be a person who is not yet born and that Savoy would then be French, you can imagine how I should have laughed. There is nothing I like so much as going back like this in life."

Maïa did justice to this Savoy dish. Her delicate fingers became more and more dexterous in peeling the chestnuts. She had unfastened her veil and turned it back. As she looked down, her face had quite a child-like expression of enjoyment. The rays of the sun threw a dappled light through the branches of the beech tree, glinting her beautiful hair and her eyelashes

with gold, and showing up the colour of her full lips. Several times I caught the flash of the emerald head of the serpent, which she was wearing on her wedding-ring finger, her divorce ring, as she called it. After the meeting with M. de Couzan and the confession I had just heard, this struck me superstitiously.

"Why, my Savoy servant ought to know of this," said Maia, commencing her second bowl of coffee.

"Of course she does," I replied.

"Well, I shall just tell her what I think of her for not mentioning it. This winter she shall give us this at tea-time. It will be a way to tempt you to come to Rue Vernet," added Maïa, dipping her fingers in the bowl of tepid water the woman had just given her.

It was five o'clock when we left the little cottage. We both turned round when we were once more on our way, to take a last look at the scene of our little rustic fête. The woman was in the doorway watching us and the look of astonishment was still in her eyes. I feel quite sure that we had let ourselves down in her esteem on account of our plebeian taste. We found the automobile ready to start. Fifteen years ago we should have said the horses were in. We started off at a good pace in the direction of Evian.

"Shall you not come and say 'Good-bye' before leaving Valcombe?" I asked on the way.

"If I can, I certainly will, but I fear it will be impossible. Madame de Brie will have a number of guests and, as she is very tired, I shall be obliged to help her to entertain."

"Will the handsome attaché be among the number?" I asked slyly.

"Yes," answered Maïa, tranquilly, "and we shall have a good billiard match."

"And a flirtation match?"

"Of course."

"Do you think it is very generous of you?" I asked.

"Oh, Monsieur de Berghes knows how much there is in it. I never deceive people, even to win their love. That certainly is very virtuous of me, for it is a delicious sensation when people are in love with you."

"It might develop into a dangerous sensation," I said.

"Not for me, Granny, I have been vaccinated."

"The effect of the serum does not last forever," I suggested.

"The effect of mine has not worn off, I can assure you," she said.

These frivolous words were pronounced in a tone that was more serious than playful and, as I looked at Maïa's profile, I once more thought that there was a sorrowful expression on her face.

We arrived just in time for the boat. Maïa produced, from some hidden corner of the automobile, a magnificent bouquet of Autumn roses for me.

"This is from Madame de Brie," she said. "You can thank her when you meet at Mortin."

I was about to protest, but Maïa would not hear of any excuse.

"I will not listen," she said. "You will have to come. If you do not," she added, "no more confidences and no more confessions."

People were all going on the boat. Maïa put her arm round me and whispered:

"And I have not confessed my biggest sin yet—"

As I felt the wheels of the boat turning that was taking me back to Lausanne, and as I saw the automobile speeding on its way taking my companion back to the

Amphion coast, I had the distinct impression that boat and automobile were not at the service of man, but at the service of Providence.

*Lausanne.*

I am certainly very happy here, happy with, and in spite of, so many things. I am happy without having any real happiness. I attribute this to the light and to the air, for the air seems to go straight to the brain and to vivify it. I attribute it also to the beauty of my horizon. My room is just in the centre of a circle, so that I have the gentle dawn, the splendour of noontide and the magnificence of the setting sun. My window frames an exquisite view of the Savoy coast and of the lake. Boats are always to be seen on this with their triangular sails continually changing shape and colour. I feel the same beatitude here as I did at D—— and I have to make the greatest efforts to rouse myself. How good it would be to die in one of these divine trances. I am afraid the gods will not grant me so sweet and poetical an ending to my life. I regret this for them and for me. Places and people that have been useful to the novelist grow curiously dear to him. Ever since the day I spent at Evian with Maia, the other shore attracts my attention all the time. It seems as though an invisible current exists between us, and as though it belongs to me a little now. At night, on entering my room, I like to see its lights shining; they look like a girdle of fire level with the water, and the effect is charming. I always watch the boat arrive. From my writing table, it looks like a great black swan advancing, thanks to its feet, in the water. Its funnel looks like the swan's neck. It always fascinates me. I try to realise that it is the result of

man's thought and that it is full of material and immaterial life. From the heights of Rigi, on seeing the tiny black specks gliding over the surface of the blue or green lakes I have experienced the same difficulty. I could not realise that these black specks were steamers and still less that they contained hundreds of individuals like me. Between knowing a thing and realising it there is a wide gulf and it needs a terrible effort to clear this gulf.

I do not know any place from which it is so easy to get about as Lausanne. Very clean electric trams take you right into the heart of the country or to the top of the Jorat chain, an altitude of 2,535 feet. These trams are used by all classes of society in a country where the people are well educated. There are funiculars which take you up to the wooded heights or down to the lake. It is perfectly wonderful to see these vehicles of modern locomotion at work, without any accident, in the narrow streets of the old City. I take my promenade in the electric trams and spend part of my afternoons in them. Their swaying motion, and the walking about that is possible, give a little wholesome exercise.

It is always interesting, too, to stroll about in this place, for it has had what we call "a past." At times a group of century old roofs can be seen, then a picturesque little island and an old fountain overgrown with flowers. Narrow, steep streets, with steps, take you back to the darkness of the Middle Ages. The Cathedral and the Château of St. Maire dazzle you with their light, for the Middle Ages had sunshine, air and a beautiful view for the monasteries and abbeys, but not for the people.

I like wandering about in the Bourg neighbourhood,

which was the old aristocratic part. It is given up to commerce now. Its houses, with little balconies of wrought iron, are either empty or transformed, but there is always a dignified look about everything.

There is a certain square in the old part of Lausanne which always delights me. It is the Place de la Palud. The roads meet here in an irregular way; it is very low down and one literally falls into it. Its town hall has a charming belfry and curious gargoyles. The façade is in Renaissance style and the windows are decorated with flowers. The old fountain, too, has flowers round it and a warlike figure of Justice which looks like a Joan of Arc. The flowers among this scene of the past are a happy inspiration. The Lausanne people used to meet here to talk over public affairs. At present it is deserted by the spirit that animated it. People no longer meet there as in former days, but with a town hall and a statue of Justice there may be great days yet in store.

When the eye is offended by the ugliness of the modern buildings, it is a veritable relief to gaze at the Cathedral and the Château St. Maire.

The Cathedral is curiously different from every point of view. From one place it looks slender and young, from another it is massive and severe, but it is always harmonious. Its great beauty lies in its perfect and sober harmony. The Lausanne people simply worship their Cathedral. They are not only proud of it, but they love it with a filial love. I have never seen an edifice that inspires so much sentiment. There must be a something that is due to atavism in this sentiment.

Poor Cathedral! It is restored with infinite care and patience, it is kept in repair with pious zeal. It is presented with costly glass windows and with beautiful

organs, and yet it remains implacably empty. There is nothing living about it except its dead. The tall bishops, lying on their own tombs, seem to be the only ones still praying there.

I went to one of the Calvinistic services which are now substituted for the rites of former days. In the magnificent nave, the worshippers seemed to be of the most ridiculous proportions. It appeared to me like a reunion of insects moving about, nearly level with the ground. The voices did not rise, and I could scarcely believe that this was a religious ceremony.

Under Gothic vaults, there should be altars, priests officiating in sacerdotal vestments, beautiful liturgical chants which mount up heavenwards, and the mystical perfume of incense. The temple, with its simple lines, is the only building for Calvinism, as the Cathedral seems to crush it. Out of pure artistic sentiment, the ex-Notre-Dame should be given back to its old religion, but I am afraid that with the Vaudois people, æstheticism will never attain to such heights.

I feel the presence of the Bishops here in the most curious way. It seems as though they are still there on the sacred hill. There is the same religious silence, the same ambient air around the Cathedral and the old episcopal palace, as around the Cathedrals and Bishops' palaces in France. It is an ambient air that is by no means Protestant. I do not think that this sensation is entirely subjective. Science tells us that it requires seven thousand years for a milligramme of musk to disappear entirely from the atmosphere. Would all traces of the human soul take less time?

The impress of the eighteenth century can still be found in certain streets of Lausanne, just as in the Rue de Varennes and the Rue de l'Université in Paris.

Among the dead here too, there are still two men who are very living. One of these is Major Davel and the other is Voltaire.

Major Davel was a Vaudois who was an officer in the Bernese army. In spite of his oath of fidelity, he endeavoured to free his country from the yoke of Berne. The idea of emancipation was not sufficiently ripe, so that he was betrayed, condemned by his own fellow citizens and beheaded. Some of them considered him guilty of felony, but for the majority he was a hero.

The Vaudois people of to-day cannot do enough in honour of him. A monument now marks the spot where he was beheaded. He has a bronze statue on one of the façades of St. Maire and, in the National Museum, there is a fine picture representing the scene of the execution. The house in which he was denounced is considered accursed, and one of the steamers is named *Major Davel*.

We should not be led to render justice to the dead in this way if it were all in vain.

As to Voltaire, the memory of him persists in a strange way. He can be felt here even more than Rousseau or Gibbon. It seems to me that if I were to meet him in the neighbourhood of "*Mon Repos*," where he had *Zaire* played, it would not give me a shock.

In all the dwelling-places of the inhabitants of this earth, there is always a centre of attraction. It is the same, perhaps, with sociably inclined insects.

The Place St. François is the rallying spot here. It is situated on high ground and is very open. It has a view of the Lake and is gay looking. The Cantonal Bank and the Hôtel des Postes give the Place a typical Zurich appearance. Then there is the electric tram office.

It would be difficult to believe that there had ever been a Franciscan convent and a cloister here, if the St. François Church were not there to prove it. It is a beautiful church and, thanks to its apse and its spire, it was saved from destruction. It has not only been restored, but *archi-reformed*. It has become a temple in all the icy plainness of such a building. The thick verdure and the two poor poplar trees in front of its porch do not give it a warmer look.

This place St. François is a veritable cross-roads. It is the meeting place for business people, for friends, lovers, newsmongers. It is the place where the four winds of the horizon blow and where the dark and light hair of all the boarding and day-school girls is blown about by the four winds of the horizon. Everyone goes to the Place St. François, just as everyone crosses the Avignon bridge and I do as everyone does, for I climb up there every day.

In this twentieth century, we have to speak of the tea shops, just as people talked of the *cafés* of the eighteenth century.

When something else has taken the place of the tea-rooms our grandchildren will like to know what these were, and they will look for us there. All places of reunion now seem to me like so many sub-sections of human electricity which Nature places as she requires them. Nature makes "copy" in such places, and I am always trying to read this living "copy"—the Master's own text.

Lausanne has its tea-rooms, of course. Two out of the number are specially characteristic, Nyffenegger's, in Rue de Bourg, and Old India, Place St. François.

The former has a rather conservative and aristocratic look. The better class Lausanne people go in there to

tea when passing by. It seems to me that in Lausanne no one does anything in a deliberately intentional way. It is always when they happen to be passing by.

"Old India" is quite cosmopolitan and is the meeting place of the young students, when they have any spare money. There is nothing luxurious here. The tables are placed as close together as possible and covered with white cloths. The tea service is common. The counter is laden with pastry which is more satisfying than dainty, but the room is light and sunny and everything is of good quality.

Between four and five o'clock, a veritable Babel of chattering can be heard here and the most varied and astonishing head-gear is to be seen. There are caps, Russian toques, felts all twisted about and hats trimmed with farm-yard feathers. Under the hats are the bewildered faces of automobilists, the bright faces of mothers regaling their offspring, the melancholy faces of Parisian or Italian society women, who have come here incognito to nurse their neurasthenia. Then there are the resolute and refined faces of intellectual women, the fresh faces of children and of young people with halos of beautiful hair. Mingled with all these women and children are groups of students, in their fine youthful plainness, South Americans with untidy hair, muddled complexions, insignificant figures, but beautiful eyes and expressive gestures, enigmatical Slavs, Anglo-Saxons with candid eyes and clear skin, eating their national "buns" solemnly. When the schools leave, whole bands of girls and young men swoop down on the little tables like so many hungry sparrows. They all chatter, flirt or gossip in the most lively way. The plates of cake they consume give a good idea of human capacity.

They may, perhaps, forget three-quarters of all they are taught on the banks of Lake Leman, but I am sure they will never forget the teas of "Old India." I certainly should not blame them, for, though knowledge may make life valuable, pleasant memories will always make it dear to us.

Lausanne is getting more and more cosmopolitan. When one wants to see the real Vaudois people, one has to go in search of them and even then they are not always to be found. The foreign element is quite a special one. It is composed of people, who, under the pretext of the education of their children or of their own health, come there to live economically in a dignified way, a thing they could not do at home. They find intellectual and artistic resources, which in other places would be beyond their means.

One meets with peculiar types of individuals in the street and in the trams. There are energetic old maids, with sunburnt or red faces, and there are virtuous, elderly Englishmen, who come with the sea gulls for the winter sports and who are not easily tired. They generally have clear eyes and a fresh complexion. Then one sees feminine faces that have grown dull from constant disappointment and a humdrum life, and women who have been beautiful but whose beauty is faded, and whose expression now reveals infinite regret and melancholy.

It is a rare thing, too, to go out without coming across some of those poor, wretchedly dressed Russian student girls, with short hair and troubled faces, their gaze turned inwards or else looking beyond this world and their lips contorted with the bitterness of their thoughts. They are frequently accompanied by a man friend, who is invariably leaning on their arm.

Several of these couples have haunted me. I wonder where they are living and on what? I wonder, too, what their hopes are? They always fascinate me, but my psychological curiosity is always stopped by that invisible insulator which every individual creates around himself and, in the case of these Russians, there seems to be a triple insulator.

The Anglo-Saxon current predominates at present in Lausanne, thanks to sports. Out-door sport is a powerful agent of expansion for England. English articles in the way of boots, clothes and all the necessary things for cleanliness and hygiene are to be found everywhere. These signs, which do not appear much in themselves, reveal an evolution, the effects of which may be very considerable.

French people have begun to come once more to Lausanne in search of liberty. Considering how many individuals are now in search of that fine thing, this would be very disturbing if the dissatisfaction were not merely platonic. We complain a great deal, and there is always an immense pleasure in doing that, but we stay at home, because we find we are better off there than anywhere else. I do not fancy that France will ever become depopulated on account of religious or political exoduses.

A little castle, built in the style of the Middle Ages by some orthodox Parisians, was pointed out to me the other day just on the shores of the lake. There is a French hospital at Ouchy. In the same district the Dominicans have an institution for young men on an estate full of memories of Voltaire. I smiled on reading over the entrance:

“ CHAMPITTET INSTITUTION, LIMITED COMPANY.”

Nothing could be more modern than that. Some nuns from Évian have transported their gods over here and have bought a villa at Tour de Peilz. The people that they turned out blessed Messrs. Combes, Briand and Co. most emphatically. Truly the repercussions of life are most interesting to study.

The intellectual communion between Lausanne and France is always very active. It is kept up by the various lecturers and artists who come one after the other. French plays are always on the bill at the theatre. The extremely Parisian ones draw the more worldly of the Lausanne people and the foreigners. The Lausanne people understand them and laugh heartily. The foreigners do not understand them, but they laugh nevertheless. Both of them have the pleasure of hearing something shocking, a pleasure that always has a certain relish about it.

Swiss professors and journalists give lectures every week on French history, literature and politics to a cosmopolitan audience of our young generation. They are working for France, without knowing it. They help these young people to know France and often to love it. I noticed, one day, the passionate attention with which all these students and visitors listened to a lecture on one of our statesmen. I said to myself, with a certain satisfaction, that the lecturer's words, fugitive though they seemed, and the French figure which they presented to us, would be stamped on those Anglo-Saxon, Slavic or Scandinavian brains and would probably create there a current of sympathy for our country.

There are not many of our novels in the windows of the book shops, for, here, as everywhere else, alas, our

novels are looked upon with distrust, and this distrust is only too well justified, I regret to say.

In the hotel libraries there is never one to be found, and this exasperates me. Why should there not be a law obliging all dangerous books to have a red cover, just as all poisons have to have a red label? Foreigners would then be able to buy our yellow covers without any fear and they might learn to know us a little. It would be good for them and good for us, too.

In the midst of this foreign invasion, which the Vaudois people are obliged to put up with as a necessary evil, they remain imperturbably Vaudois. They ought to be congratulated on this.

Certain traits of their character which I observed, here and there, first amused and then interested me.

I have said before, and I still think, that the writer is constantly being helped in his work, in a way which seems almost miraculous and which is by no means chance. Sometimes it is by a very typical conversation which reaches his ears; sometimes he witnesses a scene typical of the manners and customs of the place; and then trifling facts come to his knowledge from the most unexpected sources. He feels a little inward shock and the impression has been taken.

All this would remain a dead letter if it were not for intuition. I do not know, alas, what that invisible light is which makes things stand out so clearly.

Among the inhabitants of our Earth, there are those who go at slow speed, those who go at average speed, and those who go at express speed. The Vaudois people belong to the first category. They are not lazy, but they are slow. They speak slowly, their gestures are slow and the workings of their brain are slow, but this

slowness is often intentional. It is useful when they are distrustful. Between a question and their answer, there is time for a furtive glance, time to take the measure of the person addressing them and to see which way the wind blows. The Norman is crafty and the Vaudois is distrustful. It is impossible to obtain from the latter a definite reply, even as to the probable movement of the barometer. He is never quite well, but "fairly well." He will always reply that he will see about anything, and in this way he does not promise anything.

In all classes, the indefinite pronoun is employed in the most exasperating way. This love of the indefinite and all this distrust is, I fancy, not innate, but rather the outcome of atavism. The ancestors of this generation, fearing to be betrayed, under the Bernese yoke, learnt to be quiet. The present generation has not yet recovered its voice.

In the old ecclesiastical States of Italy, the same prudence prevails. When freedom of thought is checked for a long time, it does not know how to use its liberty at first, when once it gets it back. Such traces of oppression always seem to me pathetic.

The Vaudois people are endowed with common sense which produces in them an unconscious sense of humour. This makes them slightly sceptical, and they are given to chaffing. They have quite a vocabulary of droll expressions, and some of these are extremely graphic. Instead of saying "to strut along," they speak of "kinging it." Their verb "to reflexion" accentuates the idea of the length of time that this working of the mind takes. The term "vaudoiseries" exists and thoroughly describes the mixture of shrewdness, ingenuousness and good humour so characteristic of these people. When these "vaudoiseries" are told with the

native accent, they are irresistibly comic. Two delightful books by Benjamin Valloton, are pure "vau-doiseries." The one is entitled *Portes entr' ouvertes*,\* and the other *M. Potteraz se marie*.† I am glad to have been able to appreciate them, for they made me laugh and cry. Then, too, they have been useful to me. The Vaudois people may not perhaps say what they want always, but they know and do what they want. Their work testifies to that.

Catholicism does not appear to have left any impress on the Vaudois soul, but, on the other hand, the Reformation could not kill its Celtic ideality, nor yet its Latin gaiety. The people of Lausanne are not Calvinistic, they are only Protestant, and that is quite enough. At Geneva, the very wind is Calvinistic. Here it is only Protestant and that means it is less harsh.

Characteristics are attenuated and modified by education, but they are always to be found nevertheless. The Vaudois people have not the dogged expression of the German Swiss, but they seem surly. I quite think they are very kindly at bottom, but their kindness does not break out into smiles.

In official posts and in the shops, those employed are barely polite. They are constitutionally indolent and do not like to be disturbed, consequently they resent any disturbance quite unconsciously. In the upper classes, people are not surly, but cold, rather frigid and unemotional.

There are not many handsome specimens of this race. The young people are frequently wonderfully fresh looking. The mountain air gives them bright pink cheeks.

\* Half Open Doors.

† Dr. Portera Weds.

The Lausanne women seem to me more refined than the men. They impress me with having more brain than soul. They keep up, to the best of their ability, with the scientific, literary and artistic movements. The multitude of ideas that they absorb do not make pedants of them, but humanitarians and educators. This is the case, though, more or less, all through Switzerland. The women of the twentieth century will not have *salons* like those of the eighteenth century, but they will have dispensaries, schools and refuges. If *salons* were to come into favour again, there would be fewer pretty things said, but there would be more knowledge and more intelligence evident in the conversations.

Young people are rather strictly guarded. A Lausanne woman, who is intelligent and observant, said to me one day, when speaking of a young girl: "She is a little condensed creature." The expression seemed to me charming and very apt.

Out-door sports are now changing all this and the results are already very evident. Young men of seventeen and eighteen are taller and more refined looking than their fathers and they have a more frank expression. By the very way they wear their students' caps and their soft felt hats, fresh energy is discernible. Girls have a quicker and more independent walk than their mothers had. I fancy that the *bourgeois* mind is responsible for the absence of luxury, taste and elegance which is so striking at Lausanne. All this is a great privation, as, after a certain time, it seems like a lack of light.

In every other place, one person wants to do more than another and, thanks to this emulation, houses are beautified, women dress better and life becomes more brilliant. Everything remains dull and uniform here.

There is no desire to make any show. This characteristic should be noted, as it is unique, I fancy. A woman would be boycotted if she attempted to entertain in a grander style or wanted to eclipse other women. It would require continued effort to make a show, and this would not suit the natural indolence of Vaudois people.

Then, too, in making a show it would be necessary to own to a certain amount of wealth and the income-tax makes this somewhat dangerous. This simple fact checks vanity more effectually than any law could do. There are only three automobiles in Lausanne. The equality, which this simplicity creates, is only superficial, as the social barriers are just as high here as anywhere else.

A very democratic spirit is to be felt though, in Lausanne. Everything is organised in the interests of the masses. The frequent halts of the trams, the laying out of the tram lines, have been arranged with a view to facilitate the movements of the masses. All this is sometimes carried too far, as, in order to shorten the road by a few hundred yards, some magnificent properties have been cut up and beautiful nooks destroyed, which Nature will not restore. This care for the people is not always disinterested. It sometimes serves political interests. Decoy-birds have to be found for the electors. The rights of man have been given to the people before they were men, and they exercise tyranny like so many child-kings. The question of domestics is more difficult here than in England, as discipline and respect for employers scarcely exist. I have seen letters from housemaids and cooks, in reference to engagements, the tone of which stupefied me. They seemed to be treating their future mistresses on an equal foot-

ing with themselves, and even to be holding the sugar-plum high. We have not yet arrived at that stage in France.

The Lausanne women have not only the democratic spirit, they have the humanitarian spirit, too. Their hospital is a proof of this. It is built up on the heights and it has the most beautiful view and the finest air. Its rooms are full of air and enlivened by flowers and by the red and white check counterpanes on the beds. The patients look as happy as their suffering allows them to be. They are tended by men or women nurses, as the case may be, who are well-trained and of scrupulous cleanliness. The deaconesses look charming in their grey uniform with its cape. They all have that refined and serene look which constant unselfishness gives to the human face. The Lausanne lady who accompanied me on my visit to the hospital seemed very proud of the management and appointments of the institution. She pointed out all the various nooks and corners and opened several cupboards. There certainly was the most perfect order and cleanliness everywhere. In that building, where disease and all its accompanying horrors reign, I did not see one single objectionable thing and I had no other painful impression than that of human suffering. In the huge linen-room, which is at the top of the house and full of air and sunshine, the Sister showed me her piles of linen and bed-covers with the most frank vanity. Neither the linen nor the blankets were rough and they were all fragrantly clean.

I went down to the kitchen, where lunch was being cooked under the supervision of a deaconess. Various little dishes were being prepared on the stove and huge saucepans were being reached down, together with jars of maccaroni, rice, oatmeal, etc. Everything was invit-

ing and was carefully prepared. I do not fancy that there are many hospitals which could be visited in this way. The private bed-rooms are gay and comfortable. I was delighted with one of them and should not mind dying in that room. I had been amazed by the London Hospital, but I was touched by what I saw in the Lausanne Hospital. In the former, everything was more severe, more stiff — it was the hospital. In the latter, everything was more simple — it is the house where one would go to be nursed, and patients are certainly well nursed there.

The manager, his wife, the doctors, the men and women nurses have all created a homelike atmosphere, the only atmosphere in which Swiss people could be happy, and this is a proof of their intelligence, humaneness and patriotism. In the Middle Ages, Lausanne was a pious *grande dame*, in the eighteenth century a lettered *bourgeoise*, and, in the twentieth century, Lausanne is an intellectual and humanitarian *bourgeoise*.

### *Lausanne.*

In my joy at seeing a beautiful, sunny day again, after three days of stormy weather, I decided to go to Territet to tea. I intended to spend the afternoon with Pierre de Coulevain, but I spent it with Pierre de Couzan instead, and this was very much more agreeable.

The road from Lausanne to Territet is wonderful, and I might say unique. Nature has been obliged to condense beauty and life everywhere in Switzerland, and it has done this in the most divine way.

The chain of the Jorat, by the side of which one walks and which hangs over the lake, is an instance of this. There are memories of love, of war and of religious

legends interwoven with all this scenery. On these heights men have prayed and have been exterminated. On those there have been abbeys, feudal castles, and fortified towers. At the base of these mountains, there are now huge hotels, villas built by the dozen and all the ugliness of modern agglomerations. The whole place reminds me now of a *grande dame* who has become a hotel proprietor, but who still has something of her former nobility and beauty.

When going this way by train, one does not know which way to look. To avoid getting a stiff neck, I always take a seat on the left side, both in going and in returning.

On the way out there is a view of the Swiss vineyards, one terrace above another, right up to the top of the mountain. Then there are strange shaped rocks, thick woods, human nests that look inaccessible, bluish nooks, castles perched up high, the outlines of old ruins and of little old churches.

On the way back, there are the Savoy Alps, the lake, with the towns and villages along its shore, the graceful sea-gulls perching on the stones like so many hieratic birds. There are luminous symphonies of the setting sun and I understand these symphonies better than those of sounds.

The day before yesterday, I saw a quantity of fresh aspects and the road seemed to me remarkably short. On leaving the station I turned in the direction of Chillon and, like a child, I stopped to look at the windows of the Grand Hôtel. Just as I was passing the door, a masculine figure emerged from it. Emerged is certainly the word to use; for so unexpected was the appearance of this figure, that I very nearly came into collision with it.

“ Monsieur de Couzan ! ”

“ Pierre de Coulevain ! ”

“ Well, this is a clear case of telepathy,” exclaimed the young man, shaking hands most cordially. “ Do you know that I was just going straight to the Beau-Séjour ? ”

“ Are you staying at Territet, then ? ”

“ Not at all. My mother and I arrived at Lausanne yesterday. She is now at the Hôtel Richemont. I came to lunch here with one of my partners who is crippled with gout, and I was just going in his automobile to call on you. Are you free ? ”

“ Quite.”

“ Then may I come with you ? ”

“ Yes, indeed. We might go to Chillon and then come back here to tea. Your call will be transformed into a little excursion.”

“ And the excursion will be a little longer than a mere call,” he said, in a friendly way.

He then sent away the chauffeur and returned to me, and so I continued my way with a companion who had dropped from the skies, as it were.

“ I hope your mother is not seriously ill ? ” I said.

“ She has rheumatism in the eyes, again, as she had last year. She was under Dr. D—— before, and was so well satisfied with him, that she preferred coming back to him.”

“ Very wise of her,” I said. I stood still for a minute and then added:

“ You were joking just now, when you attributed our meeting to telepathy, but I had been thinking about you all morning.”

“ To what do I owe that honour, I wonder ? ”

“ I was probably affected by your presence at Lau-

sanne: I wanted to spend the afternoon somewhere, and I hesitated between Territet and Chexbres. I was no doubt drawn here by you."

"I am very proud, I am sure!"

"Oh, there is no need to be proud. We use the word telepathy very carelessly, but we do not attach the importance to it which it really has."

"Do you really think that?"

"Certainly I do. We are only just beginning to suspect that there is more than mere coincidence in the crossing of letters, and in the unexpected meeting with persons about whom we were just thinking. All individuals who are destined to take part in a common work, a work about which they know nothing, must be kept in constant communication."

"That seems logical, certainly."

"And they are kept in communication, probably, by means of fluids, of psychical currents. We do not yet know anything about that invisible world in the midst of which we are moving. It seems to me, though, that the invisible, which is the soul of the world, is getting more and more sensitive. We shall eventually succeed in manufacturing instruments which will register human rays and we shall turn them to account as we have done electricity. There is, perhaps, such a thing as wireless thought; just as there is wireless telegraphy."

Pierre de Couzan stood still a second, and there was a mocking smile on his face.

"Why should I have drawn you to Territet, though, when I was just going out to call on you?"

"The movement of mine was, perhaps, necessary. The first result of it is that we meet here in the midst of the most wonderful scenery, and it may be that this scenery will have some influence on our conversation."

“Have you been long in Lausanne?”

“About two months.”

“Ah, if I had only known that! You have a way of escaping from your friends, in summer, which is not at all nice. I had lost all traces of you since our meeting at Baden. I saw the Swiss manœuvres, and there is nothing I enjoy like watching manœuvres. There is all the excitement of war without its horrors. I wanted to see a certain recently created corps at work; it is the corps of automobilist volunteers. I realised, on seeing them, all the service they will be able to render to the army. These volunteers had very good machines, and, above all, very good technical skill.”

I laughed.

“Why are you laughing?” asked the young man, raising his eyebrows.

“Because, whether I will or not, I am obliged to be interested in these manœuvres.”

“Obliged?”

“Yes, it seems as though it must have been foreordained. Three persons have now told me about them, one after the other.”

“And I make the fourth?”

“Exactly. It seems as though it were a bet amongst you. One afternoon, at the “Old India” tea-rooms, I invited an American from the Beau-Séjour to my table, as he could not find another one free. He had just come back from Yverdon and he spoke with the greatest admiration of the endurance of the soldiers and the immense efforts he had seen them put forth for placing the cannons. Some wealthy manufacturers had been pointed out to him who were serving in companies commanded by men whom they employed.”

“Such a thing would be impossible in England,

America or France,' he said. 'It is the true democratic spirit. I have never seen it work before. It is a very fine thing and well worth a journey over to Europe to see.' That very evening, a Greek officer came and joined me in the hall. He went on with the subject, as though he had been instructed to continue the lesson. He described the attack and the defence of a position, just as he had seen it. I did not understand anything about it, but I listened politely. He remarked that this Swiss militia had given him the impression of a standing army, so well regulated were all its movements. It appears that this is great praise. Do you imagine I had finished with manœuvres?"

"I expect you hoped so," answered M. de Couzan, laughing.

"Well, the very next day, a Lausanne lady brought Commander D—— to see me. He is a French officer in the territorial artillery. He went still farther than the other two, but in a way that attracted my attention. He explained to me the organisation of the Swiss army. He told me that every officer had been through the ranks and that he had to be promoted grade by grade. He then spoke of the school for the recruits, of the shooting clubs, of the training that every man went in for voluntarily.

"The real force of this militia,' he said, 'lies in the thorough instruction which its men get; military, civil, moral and religious instruction. It is in this way that ardent patriots are obtained and capable officers and citizen-soldiers, who respect law and discipline, because they are capable of understanding the necessity of all this.'"

"Your Commander D—— is right," answered my

companion. "That is just the force that our reserve troops lack and our reserves are a great feature of the army. The Swiss army gave me the impression of a model militia and not of a permanent army, as your Greek friend said. That would be going too far. Discipline is less rigid, but more intelligent. One feels that both officers and soldiers are civilians who have learnt the art of warfare, but who know other things as well. In their manœuvres, and in their way of clearing obstacles, they prove their daring and their independence, but this might be somewhat dangerous in a large army. I was greatly struck by the spirit in which these citizen-soldiers accepted the inconvenience of the manœuvres, an inconvenience which must cost them a great deal, for they have to leave their business and the whole thing must be very fatiguing. They all looked as though they were proud to take part in them."

"You may be sure they really were."

"They put up with the pouring rain, not by any means like merely well disciplined brutes, but with all the philosophy of men conscious of doing their duty."

"Well, that is just the result of patriotism that has been cultivated. Children are taught, at school, all that it cost their fathers before them to create the Swiss fatherland. They are taken up to the heights in bands and shown the beautiful white summits and the green valleys. 'You have the most beautiful country in the world,' they are told, 'you ought to love it. You must prepare yourselves for serving it and for defending it and thank God for giving it to you.' Patriotism is not only instilled into them in this way; it is also encouraged by the celebration of glorious anniversaries, by federal fêtes and by shooting competitions. We have not even a National Fête in France."

"What about the fourteenth of July?" asked M. de Couzan, smiling.

"The fourteenth of July is an official holiday and a very commonplace, vulgar sort of fête-day. It seems as though it had been instituted for the sake of giving the people an opportunity of having an outdoor spree. One cannot stir the soul of the crowd by letting it see a military review, nor yet by bands at the street corners and Chinese lanterns at night. For a real national fête, there must be God, one's country and true patriots."

"Patriots? Alas! We have only partisans now."

"But in this country, it is worse than that, for instead of different political parties, there are different races, and races which frankly detest each other. A cultivated and enlightened patriotism wins the day over a hatred that is merely the result of atavism. On days of glorious anniversaries, on national fête-days, there are no longer Germans, Romands and Italians. There are only Confederates, or Swiss, and in times of danger, you may be sure that it will be the same."

"At the commencement of the manœuvres, on the first of September, I was present at a religious service, celebrated in front of the Grandson Château, by a lieutenant, who was a pastor in Belgium and who had come to do his military service. It was a very beautiful little ceremony and very touching, and there were scarcely any dry eyes in the assembly. After the religious service, a sergeant made a little speech to his comrades. I never heard anyone speak of his country, of peace and of war with such philosophy and justice. I remember several of the things he said. 'A nation,' he declared, 'which refuses beforehand to fight, no matter what may be its motive, is lacking in dignity. One has to deserve one's liberty. As long as evil is not conquered, goodness must

remain armed, in order to continue its work. What constitutes the worth of a country is the worth of each member of it. Switzerland is worth what we are worth.' "

" Yes," I said, " I read Benjamin Vallotton's magnificent speech over and over again. Commander D— sent it to me, together with some illustrated papers and a little pamphlet by General Langlois, entitled: *Ten Days with the Swiss Army*. I had quite a collection of military literature on my table, and this struck me as extremely comic, considering my innate hatred of everything of the kind. I never saw manœuvres rouse the patriotic feeling as these did. Officers and soldiers alike must have been encouraged by the general interest, for they were the great theme of conversation. Even the children flattened their noses against the windows of the newspaper shops in their anxiety to see any illustrations showing the movements of the soldiers, and I overheard various remarks from these young citizens which revealed a fine warlike instinct. When I was out one day, I saw two youngsters, of about seven and eight years of age, with a bow and arrow, aiming at the fruit on a tall apple tree. A child of about three was collecting the arrows for them. I fancy this was a fine example of the influence of tradition."

" Yes, certainly."

Pierre de Couzan stopped short a minute and then, turning towards me, he said:

" Tell me, do you think that we are masters of warfare? "

" No, not any more than we are of thunder. It is one of the means Nature employs for clearing away the superfluous males."

" Kind Nature! Why are there too many created? "

" Because it is necessary to create them, probably.

Poor human beings. They little think that the engines of warfare that they manufacture at such a cost of money and labour are destined for their own extermination. I saw, in an illustrated paper the other day, the model of an automatic gun which does not get warm. It can work, that is, it can kill, for a very long time without getting warm, and this was thought admirable. That is a fine specimen of the inconsequence of man, of his pitiful inconsequence. I went to see the Creusot exhibit at the Paris Exhibition of 1900. The building was painted red, which was most symbolical. As I looked at those great open mouths of bronze, I realised suddenly what their mission was, and I moved back instinctively, shuddering. The engineer who was with me, little thinking what my feelings were just then, pointed out to me, with all the pride of a veritable savage, a cannon that he called 'his child.' He told me that he had worked at it for three years.

"' You worked three years,' I said to him, perfectly furious, 'to make an engine for destroying and mutilating your fellow-creatures?'

"He was amazed and he glanced at 'his child' in such a scared way, that I was convinced of his *innocence*. He had thought of nothing but the beauty of his mathematical calculations. It had not occurred to him that their very correctness made them murderous.

"On leaving the Creusot exhibit and the engineer as well, I went into the room devoted to the Pasteur exhibit. There were rows of huge glass bottles full of microbes and bacilli, yellow, green and indeed all the various possible shades of decomposition. There was enough poison contained in those bottles to destroy a whole human race. Compared with these horrors, which

were probably marvels, the cannons seemed to me quite noble and beautiful."

"Because they only exterminate the males, perhaps?" suggested M. de Couzan, with his mocking smile.

"No, because they kill in a clean way. Ah, well, we may be sure that the engines of warfare and the germs are all in the hands of God. We cannot regulate the movement of mortality any more than we can that of natality."

"Do you believe that it will ever be possible to have peace?" asked my companion.

"Yes, I do, since the idea of it has come into human minds. It will germinate slowly, but it cannot perish, because it is in harmony with progress. It will not be instituted in our time, as the elements of discord are too numerous. I was at Baden on the first of August, the day of the six hundredth anniversary of the Confederation. At half past eight in the morning, all the bells in Switzerland rang. There were cathedral bells, chapel bells, the bells of all the municipal buildings. There were beautiful, sonorous bells, and cracked ones, and there were all the German, French and Italian bells, pealing out at the same minute and ringing together for a quarter of an hour, as a sign of indissoluble union. I went to the Place de la Gare to hear them and the crowd was all assembled there. The waves of patriotic emotion emanating from that crowd affected me in the most delightful way. As the moment drew near, the people became more and more solemn and there was a religious silence when the first joyful peals rang out. The standard bearers saluted and took their place at the head of a triumphal procession. I returned to the hotel, quite overcome by what I had witnessed. I

described the scene to a group of acquaintances and I added:

“ ‘I hope the day may come when there will be a European Confederation and that the bells of all the States will ring out peace at the same moment.’ ”

“ ‘Yes, but before that, *we* shall have something to say,’ remarked a Greek, with a very mild expression on his face.

“ ‘And so shall *we*, *per Bacco*,’ exclaimed an Italian.

“ ‘And *we*, too,’ added a Polish orator.”

“ Yes,” remarked M. de Couzan, smiling, “ and there will be as many wars as there are explanations. France, too, will have something to say. After all, is war such a bad thing? Before it kills men, it has helped them to live. It has given work to thousands of men and it brings into play our great faculties. It makes us create marvels, war-ships, torpedo boats, submarines and balloons, etc. It rouses humanity and appeals to the very depth of its soul, and I fancy that humanity needs rousing. Then, too, it is useful for clearing some of us away. It makes moral and material gaps in the population.”

“ Well, I hope, but of course it is only the hope of an ignorant woman, that war will become a mathematical art, a sort of luxurious art, and that the means it will have at its disposal will be too formidable to employ against the human atom. I imagine nations having land armies, navies and armies in the air, just as private individuals have race-horses. All these armies will serve to cultivate manliness, keep up strength and encourage emulation. Nations will then compete on fields of manoeuvres, just as they have hitherto done on fields of battle. They will win victories and earn glory — and all this without any shedding of blood.”

"And what about the superfluous males? How shall you get rid of them?"

"There will be no superfluous ones, then, perhaps."

Just at this moment, we arrived at Chillon. From the spot we had reached, the mass of the old mansion seemed to be between the white summit of the Dent du Midi and the blue water of the lake. The sea-gulls were playing all around it. After our conversation about war, the calmness and peace here seemed delightful.

"You see," I said, "there have been furious battles here, human creatures have been tortured and murdered in that dungeon and now there is peace. It will be the same all over the world. Peace will surely come."

"Amen," said my companion. "In the meantime, I think we might have a cup of tea."

"Yes," I answered, "but let us go back to the Grand Hôtel at Territet for it."

"Just as you like," he said, and we took the tram at once. On the way back we overheard a very amusing little dialogue between an old English couple.

"When we were young, there were no trams," remarked the husband.

"No, but we had our legs then," answered the wife, in a rather peevish tone.

"We might neither have our legs, nor the trams. It would have been like that in the old days."

"Another optimist," remarked my companion to me, in an undertone.

If anyone had overheard our conversation on the way to Chillon, it would certainly have seemed as though we were talking about something that interested us deeply personally. No one would have imagined that there was a very active current of thoughts between us

which had nothing to do with the subject of our conversation. These simultaneous actions of the human brain always seem to me most wonderful. In reality, we were both of us longing to speak of our meeting at Évian. The young man's haste to call on me had been prompted by his wish to know what effect the meeting had had on Maïa. This was so natural. I counted on the tea that we were going to take together for making him communicative. Tea is apt to make people confidential. We went straight to the Grand Hôtel and tea was served out on the terrace, in a sheltered corner, from which there is an admirable view.

My hero, or rather my living "subject," was there quite near me and I did not want to miss a single change of expression on his face.

We both felt magnetically that we were going to *talk*. I was curious to know what turn our conversation would take. Conversation is another thing over which we have no control. It carries us along like a wave, it takes us away from our subject and brings us back again in the most odd way. It does not tell you anything about what you want to know and it makes you say things that you do not want to say. It works, of course, in carrying out the designs of Providence and, as we do not know what these are, we cannot govern it.

I passed the cup of tea, which I had carefully prepared, to my guest. I had put a slice of lemon and one lump of sugar in it, as I knew his taste. He passed me the bread and butter, took a slice himself and doubled it up slowly, in English fashion. He glanced at me and there was a questioning look in his eyes, but I pretended not to understand it.

"It is excellent tea," I said.

"Yes," he replied.

"Oh, the beautiful sea-gulls," I exclaimed, watching the graceful creatures as they moved about before us. "There used not to be any here, but Nature observed that there were no birds round Lake Leman and sent these. Just look how well they harmonise with the scenery."

"Yes, they certainly do."

"It appears, though, that they never make their nest here. Not a single nest has ever been seen," I continued.

"How curious!"

I felt that "my subject" was getting impatient. He was probably wondering whether I should begin to talk of the moon or of the stars next. I poured him a second cup of tea.

"By the bye," he began, taking the cup from me, "what did you think of our meeting at Evian?"

"Well, I was rather taken aback, I must own," I answered. "It was not at all on the programme of our day."

"No, I imagine not. You do not think that was an effect of telepathy, do you?" he said, putting his head on one side, with a little gesture peculiar to him.

"You do not know," I said.

"Well, I know that my thoughts were a thousand miles away from Madame Maïa Lasserre."

"As far away as all that?" I asked ironically.

"Yes, a friend of mine, knowing that I was to spend three or four days at Thonon, asked me to visit a certain estate he felt inclined to buy, near Evian. I had arranged to meet the lawyer who has it in his hands to sell and, whilst waiting for him, I thought I would go

and have luncheon. Why I should have gone to the Grand Hôtel, instead of to another hotel, when I had put up my automobile, I cannot tell."

"Ah, that you cannot tell?" I exclaimed, triumphantly.

"You fancy that Providence pitched me into the middle of your little party?"

"Certainly it did, since the conjunction of circumstances had neither been foreseen by you nor by us."

"It was mere chance."

"Oh, please do not repeat that empty, childish old saying! Chance is a mere word, it is not someone."

"But why should the gods have played us this trick?"

"I am not in their secrets."

"I am sorry you are not."

"I am, too."

"Anyhow, I hope that the unfortunate coincidence did not spoil your day, or make any difference to your companion's good humour."

This was distinctly a feeler.

"It did not alter anything," I answered, laughing. "We had a very good time. Maïa is one of the most agreeable women I know."

"Indeed!"

The affectation of indifference which my guest put into that word amused me immensely.

"Yes; all the questions of Life interest her. Her ideas have widened out; and then she is so impulsive and so frank."

"Oh, yes, very frank," interrupted M. de Couzan, with a little disagreeable laugh that I did not understand.

"Her qualities of mind and heart," I continued imperturbably, "make her quite a rarity in these days."

"A rarity? Ah, yes, she is that, she certainly is a rarity!" repeated the young man, in a sarcastic tone.

"We spent a delightful afternoon in a chestnut grove in the neighbourhood of Meillerie. Maïa adores Savoy as I do," I added.

"Really, I was not aware that she did."

"Oh, as one gets older one loses certain tastes and acquires others; I taught her a fresh one the other day."

I told him about our little feast at the house of the peasant woman, and I felt that every one of my words carried. One always realises when this is the case and it is very pleasant.

As my companion refused a third cup of tea, I invited him to smoke.

"What an indulgent friend you are," he said, putting his hand on mine. There was silence between us for a moment and he shook the ashes slowly from his cigar.

"My successor, I suppose,—that young man at your table?" asked M. de Couzan, with a side glance.

My heart beat with joy at this question, as it betrayed interest, if not jealousy.

"Your successor?" I repeated. "No, not as far as I know. Maïa will never marry again as long as her mother lives."

"That does not prevent certain sentiments."

"Yes, it does, with a woman like Maïa. Then, too, she has set herself so much work and she has so many interests now that she has not much room in her life for what you call sentiments. It is true," I added, wickedly, "that love always manages to make a place for itself everywhere."

My "subject's" eyelids blinked, his nostrils quivered slightly and there was a little nervous tremor under

his moustache. He threw his cigar away unfinished and lighted another. Then, as though he had pulled himself together again, he said:

“Do you know you have made a conversion?”

“Really?”

“Yes, I am beginning to look at life as you do.”

“Putting my modesty aside, I congratulate you,” I said, “for it is the only way to understand something of it.”

“Oh, I do not understand it at all yet, but at any rate I realise how useless it is to regret anything. I have even ceased bearing any grudge against that poor Madame de Syriac who was responsible for my marriage. I am quite convinced that she was only the agent of Providence.”

“Did Maïa ever tell you what made her decide in your favour?”

“What made her decide in my favour?” repeated Pierre de Couzan, with an expression of profound amazement. “No, she merely told me that she had married for the sake of getting her freedom and that she did not love me at all. That is what she told me the day after our marriage and what she proved to me during the next three years.”

I was so stupefied that I could not find a word to say at first. My mind then began to work quickly and I had an intuition of the truth of the matter.

“But, my dear friend,” I said, “a woman who felt that would never have said it.”

“Oh, yes, a woman with Maïa Lasserre’s character would. She prides herself on her frankness. As to the honesty of it, well, she ought to have owned this a week earlier.”

“Listen to me. It may have been that Maïa married

for the sake of getting her freedom. That is quite possible and, indeed, I am almost sure she did."

"Ah!"

"But I am just as sure that she would never have married a man for whom she did not care, or to whom she was indifferent. She certainly had plenty of choice in the matter. She preferred you and you had won her heart. I will tell you how."

I told him the story of the horse, and I saw a smile under his moustache which softened his whole face.

"Well, from henceforth I shall think twice before I help another horse up. That is the way good deeds are rewarded."

"I am surprised that you should have taken a spoiled child's outburst seriously, and I would wager that it was nothing else. And I suppose that, with your Savoy pride and susceptibility, you never attempted to win your wife?"

"What do you mean by winning my wife?" asked Pierre de Couzan, almost haughtily.

"You know better than I do what I mean. I suppose you have been obliged to descend to that sometimes with women. They have not always flung themselves in your arms on your way through life, I imagine."

"Not exactly, but it is the first time a woman ever told me she did not care for me afterwards."

Ah, this was the secret of it all. It was the insult and the wounded pride of the male. The dark red, which the very memory of it now brought to my guest's face, created a wave of maternal pity within me and I inwardly accused Maïa of being "a wretched girl."

"You can imagine the effect of such a declaration on a man very much in love, for I was very much in love with Maïa. I had never even given a thought to her

as an heiress. If, as you say, she cared for me before our marriage, well, she certainly did not after. That is all about it and that is very much worse." He got up from his chair and then sat down again mechanically.

"We never had any scenes," he went on, "nor yet any violent quarrels, but we experienced to the full all the joys of not being suited to each other. There is nothing more worrying and nothing more demoralising. I was often to blame. It would have been too stupid if I had never been to blame," he added in a burst of anger. "We Savoyards have vile dispositions."

"Oh, no, you have not."

"Well, you did not use exactly those words, just now, when you declared that we were proud and susceptible. You were quite right and you might have added that we are not at all long-suffering. I began to frequent the Club, the refuge of disappointed husbands, and I can tell you there are plenty of them. Women talk of their disappointments, but men keep them to themselves. How is a man to pass the time at his club without gambling, if he is young? Well, I gambled and I might have done much worse than that. After coming home at daybreak, with one's collar up to the ears and one's hat on the back of one's head, and after being stirred up all night by the Queen of Spades, one has the sensation of having been bled dry and one's sleep is as heavy as lead. A husband is not exactly very pleasant company the next day at luncheon."

"No, I should think not."

"Both at the Club and at Monte Carlo, I had some extraordinary runs of luck and some extraordinary runs of bad luck, too. All that excited me wildly. My passion for gambling would have become nothing less than a vice if our divorce, and the changes it brought

about, had not turned my attention in another direction. My divorce was my salvation."

"And now," I said, putting my hand on the young man's arm, "will you let me talk to you, not as an old friend, but as an aged friend?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, "overwhelm me with reproaches."

"No," I answered, "for I quite realise that you sinned out of pure ignorance, ignorance of life — and of Natural History."

Pierre de Couzan gazed at me with a look of comic dismay on his face, which soon changed into an expression of gaiety.

"Ah," he remarked, "and so you think that Natural History is necessary for marriage?"

"Absolutely necessary. Now, listen to me; do you not think it necessary to understand your automobile?"

"Yes, that is quite necessary, and then, too, that is the greatest pleasure it gives. A chauffeur must know his machine thoroughly, body and soul, as it were; he must *feel* with it and understand the language of its vibrations and trepidations."

"Well, you confessed to me that, when you married, you had no idea what a girl was or was not?"

"Yes, that is quite true."

"And yet you started on a long, long journey with that unknown person. It was a much more dangerous experiment than starting with your mechanical plaything."

"Alas, yes," admitted M. de Couzan, blowing the ashes from his cigarette.

"You see, we are still living mere literature. Poets and writers have imagined God and woman. She comes to us ready made from the East, just as religion does,

too, for that matter. The Western man accepted this ideal, because it flattered his instincts and his vanity.

"Even at the present day, a girl, according to his idea, is a pleasant, passive creature, quite irresponsible, a white soul in a white body, a being created solely for him. Ever since the Garden of Eden, he has always had this idea.

"Natural History would teach him, though, that within that young girl there is an intense life. Physiologically and morally, she is being worked upon for her future rôle. An ardent, hidden struggle goes on within her as a result of this, and this enfeebles and may kill her. Atavism reveals to her, in a confused way, what people are trying to keep from her. Strange visions cross her mind and she has fine dreams of moral grandeur and low desires, noble and low thoughts turn by turn. Her surroundings and her education modify these phenomena, accentuate or minimize them, but all girls are subject to them. No one can tell the result of all this. Parents marry their daughters when there is a good opportunity without troubling as to whether they are ready for marriage. Generally speaking, in our country, and in a certain class, girls are not ready. A doctor would guess this at a glance, but no one ever thinks of consulting a doctor."

"You do not want girls to be *demi-vierges*?" asked my host with a comic expression of alarm.

"Heaven forbid," I answered. "Girls of that kind are badly prepared for marriage, and that is worse. No, I should like girls to know what life expects from them. The knowledge of that would keep them purer and more worthy of their rôle than ignorance does."

"And what about poetry?"

"Poetry? Oh, I like that! Three quarters of the young wives feel like telling their husband, the day after their marriage, that they hate him, and yet a few weeks later they will perhaps adore him. Those who were really in love with their *fiancé*, say: 'If it had been anyone else —'"

My host raised his eyebrows and a smile could be seen under his moustaches.

"You think it is like that?" he asked with an expression of incredulity which had a certain impertinence in it.

"I am sure of it," I answered. "There is more physiological unconsciousness with women than with men. The reflex movements of this annihilate her will power and make her say and do things that she may regret bitterly later on. She herself is the first victim of these reflex movements. When she has learnt to govern them, she will be someone. Taking her education into consideration, Maïa was not ready for marriage. Her femininity rebelled, not against you personally, but against the law which enslaved her, against the Eternal masculine. These reflex movements spoke, it was not Maïa herself."

Pierre de Couzan's expression, which had first been mocking, was now grave.

"I had never thought of all this," he said, humbly. "Life is very terrible," he added.

"It is not a child's game," I replied. "It is a game of the gods. Natural History would teach you many more things."

"What other things?" he asked.

"Well, in the first place, that a husband cannot transform a girl into a passionate wife in twenty-four hours."

"I suppose it needs training," he said, his eyes bright with mischief.

"Exactly! And then, too, if woman was made to conquer, she was also made to be conquered. Those are two primordial instincts. A wife is not very exacting. A pleasant word, a little attention or a caress, and all things would go well. A husband thinks he can dispense with all ceremony, and this taking things for granted is contrary to one of the laws of Nature, the law of preparations. *Honte à qui mal y pense.* It wounds a wife, humiliates her and provokes a sort of unconscious ill-humour — that ill-humour without any apparent cause which you men call caprice and which irritates you."

"It must be due to the play of the reflex movements?" suggested Pierre de Couzan, putting his head on one side, in the manner peculiar to him.

"Yes. You see the bird sings for his companion, but man is an animal who only sings for the wife of another man."

The Baron's shoulders shook with laughing.

"That is true, quite true," he said.

"And take note of this fact, too," I continued. "The wife is not merely the woman in love that you like to imagine her. If you could only overhear certain private conversations, you might lose some of your illusions which are very flattering to yourselves, but you would certainly esteem her more. What she loves above everything else in man is the child. She is not merely a woman in love, as such women are not good mothers, and the wife, throughout all humanity, is the Mother."

My companion's face betrayed his emotion as I said this, but a sudden idea brought a smile again to his lips.

"Have not women anything to learn from Natural History?" he asked.

"Very much. If they only knew something of it, they would realise that men have not been created merely for them. Their demands would then be less childish and they would be able to help men more efficaciously. Their intuition makes up to them a little for their ignorance, and you may congratulate yourselves on that. You see, we do not know each other yet, and that is the cause of our misunderstandings."

"Yes, you are right. I, for instance, had dreamed of having a pleasant home and a fine family—I had counted on this without thinking of the reflex movements."

Maïa's face suddenly came to my mind, side by side with the handsome face of Pierre de Couzan, and I said quickly, without giving him time to protest, "If I were going to help you both to marry again, I would arrange for you to marry each other!"

This speech came to my lips quite naturally and was quite involuntary. My host flushed slightly and laid his hand on mine.

"Oh, Pierre de Coulevain!" he said, with a certain emotion, "that is an idea worthy of a novelist!"

"Novelists arrange marriages very well," I answered.

"Yes, but as they nearly always leave their heroes at the altar, there is no knowing how the marriages turn out. There is always the reflex movement to be taken into account. Believe me, it is always better to let your lovers die than to let them marry. Take Romeo and Juliet, for instance. We are quite sure that they loved each other to the end. Now if she had become Mrs. Montague . . . ?"

"Juliet, Mrs. Montague! Oh, be quiet!"

"There, you see . . . Romeo, with true masculine ingratitude, might have reproached his wife for the way she allowed him to climb up to her balcony. . . . Then, too, he might have reserved his songs for someone else's wife."

We both laughed heartily at the idea.

"Talking of lovers," I said, "have you ever read *La Nouvelle Héloïse?*"

"I have begun it several times, but I have never been able to finish it," he answered.

"I was curious to read it again in its own atmosphere," I said. "It is the most pedagogic, Protestant and bourgeois romanticism. Rousseau's characters are regular puppets and he has fastened all the idealism of the eighteenth century on to them, with its conception of love, friendship, social intercourse and equality. The chief persons of the novel have the same effect on me as copy-book headings, and yet they have made other people feel, they have stirred a whole multitude of souls. The waves of love created by them still exist. It is impossible to pass through Clarens without thinking of the amiable Julia, or rather the irritating Julia, in my opinion. We are sure to think of Saint Preux, on going to Miellerie. Is not that a fine psychical phenomenon? A writer may rest assured that he will be making life for a very long time."

Pierre de Couzan looked round at the lake and the mountains and I was delighted to see this.

"What would Rousseau and Byron say if they saw this spot taken possession of by hotels and pensions?" he asked.

"Their romanticism would naturally protest," I said, "but I think there is a very living poetry in it all.

Formerly very few people ever enjoyed the beauty of this landscape. At present, thousands of people come and admire it. They refresh their eyes and their very soul with it all. The snow on the heights has become a source of health and pleasure. To these apparently commonplace hotels and to these cheap boarding houses, Providence brings men and women from the uttermost parts of the earth and the various exchanges necessary to Life take place. All this seems greater to me than the words of a poet."

"What a modernist you are!" said my companion, smiling.

"Yes, I certainly am, as indeed all people are who are not ungrateful to the gods."

I rose as I said this, for it was time to start to the station for our train. Whilst waiting for the express, I watched the funicular going up to Glion. From below, one does not realise what those two things are which climb thus up the mountain side. When they meet, the one coming up and the other going down, they look like two huge insects, with white backs, exchanging greetings like the ants. And to think that those things are full of human beings! I was standing at the very edge of the platform, fascinated by the sight I was watching and I completely forgot the express. Suddenly I felt the wind from it, its force of attraction, and something hurting my left arm.

"Take care!" I heard a voice cry out. M. de Couzan had pulled me back. His fingers had grasped my arm and, on looking at his pale face, I realised the danger I had just run.

"You saved my life, I fancy," I said.

"Oh, no," he replied, helping me into the train.

"I am quite ashamed of myself," I said, when once we

were seated. "I did give you a fright. Your very nose turned pale."

"How in the world did you have time to notice my nose?" he said.

"I have no idea, but I have noticed that with a man, his nose does turn pale at once."

Someone was just getting into our carriage and M. de Couzan said to me quietly, with an amused look:

"Natural History again?"

I nodded in reply.

We walked to the Beau-Séjour from Lausanne station and, on the way, M. de Couzan asked me how long I was staying.

"Until the end of the month," I replied. "Maïa has made me promise to spend a few days at Mortin before returning to Paris."

I fancied I saw a fleeting expression of joy on my companion's face.

"Well," he said, "the St. Martin's summer is generally delightful in the Eure district. When you are back in Paris you must send me word. You must promise me something, too, and, as I have just saved your life, you cannot refuse. . . ."

"What is it?" I asked.

"To come and have dinner with a poor bachelor," he said. "By way of tempting you, I will tell you that I have a Savoy cook, an excellent cook engaged for me by my mother."

"Oh, yes, I will come," I said. "Bachelors' dinners always amuse me."

As we shook hands at the door of the hotel, he remarked, with the mischievous look in his eyes:

"I shall meditate on the reflex movements peculiar to the feminine mind."

"You could not do anything which would be more profitable to you," I replied tranquilly.

\* \* \* \* \*

I feel quite convinced that my afternoon has not been wasted. I have just been reading over this long conversation with my "subject." It describes the most curious zig-zags — zig-zags round a straight line. It seems to me that that is the symbol of life.

*Lausanne.*

I have just felt the action of "the other one" in such an evident manner that I am quite startled by it. I have already confessed that I have a passion for cards. I have tried to discover what the attraction really is which they have for certain individuals. I fancy I know now. In one single game cards may cause the players to feel joy, hope, vexation, anger, the triumph of victory, the humiliation of defeat, the sensation of the unforeseen and the feverishness of expectation. All these various emotions, coming in rapid succession, produce a kind of frenzy, and the frenzy produced by cards is one of the frenzies produced by Life. Cards also bring rest to certain zones of the brain and this, above everything else, is their *raison d'être*.

Every evening, a certain English Colonel with white hair, fresh complexion and blue eyes, a fine specimen of a military man, comes to me in the hall, where I am usually talking to someone. He takes his pipe slowly out of the corner of his mouth and invites me, not (alas) to a waltz, but to a rubber. I have surnamed him "the serpent," as he takes a wicked pleasure in tempting me. If I have worked well during the day, I accept his invitation, but if not, I refuse it. He simply remarks, "Oh!" puts his pipe back in its place, holding the bowl

of it affectionately with a gesture peculiar to the Englishman and no doubt a reminiscence of his feeding bottle days, and then walks away with his measured stride.

This evening I had listened to the "serpent's" temptation and had taken my place at the bridge table. After repeated bad luck I finally had a magnificent hand. I called "No trumps." With a beaming face my partner laid down a splendid dummy's hand. Very triumphantly I took the first trick and then proceeded. Just at that second a paragraph I had written a fortnight previously came to my mind. It was about Maïa. She had told me that, on seeing the physiological horrors of a pilgrimage to Lourdes, she had exclaimed, "Where is God!" I answered, "God is in the hope that buoys up all these afflicted ones."

That evidently was not enough, for whilst I was calculating my cards "the other one" repeated in the most imperturbable manner, "Where is God?" I put out a seven of diamonds and, whilst I was completing my victory, "the other one" went on, "God is in the forces of sickness just as in those of health." And until the rubber was played out I kept hearing "the other one" repeat: "Where is God?" Finally I was obliged to give up the game, thanks to the persistency of "the other one," and I went to my room and completely altered my paragraph. I must own that it was much better for the alteration. I had never before had such a proof of cerebral duality. As a rule "the other one" works at the more touching scenes and develops the more elevated subjects whilst I myself attend to all that is more prosaic and at times even ridiculous. My sense of humour has so frequently been tickled by this that I have laughed aloud.

Are ideas within us or outside us? If they exist in our brain cells, they are developed by psychical currents. If they are outside us, they are transported by atoms like those which transport electricity, and these electrons penetrate in this way into the human brain to be worked up there and transmitted, to germinate or die. It seems to me that I feel them come now. Perhaps this is an effect of my imagination. They give me a certain anguish when I feel them coming, as I know all it will cost me to put them on paper. I should feel greater anguish, though, if they did not come.

Why has the answer to the question, "Where is God?" been so long in reaching me? The psychical currents had not touched the cell which contained it perhaps, or else the electron which was carrying it did not arrive. Who knows? Ah, who can know? However it may be, it is the first time that "the other one" has ever come for me to the bridge table, and I hope it may be the last time.

### *Lausanne.*

There is no country so much known and so little known as Switzerland. In the days of post-chaises and coaches, a class of guests used to arrive there who had time to visit it and who went there to refresh themselves, body and soul. Now-a-days it has tourists, living cinematographs, and this is how they see it. They arrive at hotels which are more or less crowded. The rooms which they were promised are scarcely ever given to them, and consequently they are annoyed. The day after their arrival, they start out with their Baedeker and begin the series of excursions recommended to them. Everything has been marked out for them and properly indicated, even to the notes of exclamation. It is very

rare for them to add any to these. They are hauled up on to the heights by all the means of modern mechanism possible. On seeing clouds under their feet, such as they have been accustomed to seeing over their heads, inaccessible peaks and deep valleys, they exclaim: "Superb! Splendid! Astounding!" When once they have paid this tribute of admiration, they descend again, very well contented—more particularly with themselves. They return to the hotel, dine more or less well, listen to the music which is served to them with their coffee, and then go to bed. They repeat this little exercise until they have completed their itinerary. They then imagine that they know Switzerland. Yes, but Switzerland does not know them. They have climbed like insects up the sides of its Alps, and Switzerland has treated them as insects. It has not revealed itself to them. They have only seen mountains, glaciers, lakes, white, green and blue colouring, funiculars, electric railways and steam boats.

Countries are like books. They speak to some people and they are silent with other people. An artist once said to me, shrugging his shoulders, as he looked at the Dent du Midi, "It is too much like a chromo." There are eyes to which everything in the world is only like a chromo. I used to have such eyes and the consciousness of this makes me very humble now.

Switzerland is really one of those tables of harmony which Nature has created for the play of light, and this play acts on the human brain as sound does. Its horizons, which are not vast, make communion with them more penetrating and deeper.

At certain sunsets I have seen the faces of men and women, of society men and even of society women, reflect real emotion. I have seen faded faces become

divinely young. The Swiss soul is a healthy soul, more symphonious than melodious. It is a *green* soul, if I may venture to say that. Switzerland does not take up much space on the map, but it occupies a large place in European politics. I should never have realised this, if I had not read its history over again. I learnt Swiss history a long time ago, at the age when a child is scarcely more than a gramophone, but I certainly did learn it. If we no longer remember things, we ought, at any rate, to have known them once. I remembered the details or the tradition of William Tell and the battles of Morgaten and of Morat. This was certainly not very much. Last year a young man of the Vaud Canton was introduced to me and he came to call on me several times. I used to ask him questions about Switzerland, more out of politeness than from any wish for information. He told me a great deal and seemed to want me to know Switzerland. After each visit, he would send me some illustrated paper, such as *La Patrie Vaudoise* or *La Patrie Neuchâteloise*. I soon had quite a pile of these *Patries* in my room. I looked through them carelessly, more from a sense of duty than pleasure. I saw something of Switzerland from all these illustrations and I was gradually tempted to study something of its history. That, too, was a "Divine manuscript!" I read it in the excellent abridged edition by B. van Muyden. It had never occurred to me to wonder how it came about that, in spite of the law by which the great devour the small, Switzerland has never been devoured by its powerful neighbours. I see all that now. It would make a fine heroic novel and I do not know which to admire most, the gods who conceived it, or the men who have lived it.

The seed of that tree, known as the Helvetician Con-

federation, was sown by the three little forest Cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden. There were men there who had managed to preserve the freedom of certain lands in spite of ecclesiastical and feudal lords.

Three of these, inspired by the idea that "Union is strength," signed a pact, engaging "to help each other mutually, to go to the rescue of each other always, either within their own country or outside it, if anyone should attempt to do violence to either of them, to annoy or molest them or their belongings." This pact, in fine Gothic handwriting, is contained in seventeen lines, dated August 1st, 1291. It bears the seals of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden and may be considered as the certificate of birth of Switzerland. The tree had three branches. It was so slender that neither the Church, the Empire nor France thought of cutting it down. It was with great difficulty that it grew up, as it had all the maladies of childhood and youth. It went through its baptism of blood at Morgaten. Several times it came very near death and, for centuries, its formidable neighbours threatened its life. It resisted everything, even the elements of destruction it had within itself. It survived and triumphed, because it had a mission—it was bearing along the future. At present, it is six hundred years old, it has twenty-two branches, all the flowers of civilisation—and the thorns, too.

In the Zurich Historical Museum, there are some old engravings which give an idea of the combats, thanks to which Liberty was to come forth.

These drawings are striking, although very primitive. There are wooded slopes, the trees figuring by small conical strokes, a feudal castle, a church, a village, a *mélée* of men attacking each other, foot soldiers against foot soldiers, horsemen against horsemen. There is a

terrible mingling of lances, spears, human bodies and horses' buttocks, all surmounted by various flags. The movement of the legs in the foreground is admirably rendered, as this seems to make the whole scene living. The invisible and irresistible force that presides over the battle can be felt. Human fury is let loose and the contrast between that and the peaceful scenery is infinitely pathetic. This — in order to defend that!

These fights, reproduced in a drawing of a few square inches, give the impression of so many atoms, fighting. They are atoms, alas, but we know how atoms can suffer. It was then, thanks to the "malice of the times," that the Swiss learnt the art of warfare. They learnt it so well that, later on, they were frequently the arbitrators for peace, so true is it that peace is the fruit of warfare.

They have often been reproached for selling their blood. If they sold it, they always gave it at any rate, and those who bought it, whether the Church, the Empire or France, did not always pay for what they bought.

The Swiss were not born warriors, but they were born intellectual. Whilst some of them were fighting for the integrity of their territory, others were fighting against ignorance, prejudice, the slavery of the mind and for the good of democracy. This dual struggle, which has been going on for centuries, is the summing up of Swiss history and it makes it one of the most glorious of histories.

On hearing the overture of *William Tell*, on the heights of Axenstein, with the fine scenery of the Opera, I imagined that Rossini must have taken this history for his theme. The music gives one a sensation of snowy peaks, of melancholy, of very green valleys, of rustic

life. It then gets broader and more elevated until it becomes heroic, startling, sorrowful and, by clever and melodious shades, gradually takes us back to Nature, to peace, as it was in the beginning, and by that time the whole drama has been lived.

During my stay by the Lake of the Quatre-Cantons, I once more experienced the subjective effect of certain memories, of certain legends, more particularly of those connected with the primordial sentiments of mankind. When the steamer passed Rütli, where, according to the chroniclers, resistance was organised against the tyranny of the Austrian overseers, the tourists who know the story become silent and gaze with all their eyes at the little landing stage. The name Rütli, seems literally to flare out. A French priest, who was seated next to me, felt obliged to let someone else share in the emotion he felt. He pointed it out to me as though it were some sacred spot, and said in a low voice:

“ Madame, that is the cradle of Swiss independence.”

“ And the cradle of the independence of other nations, too,” I answered, smiling.

Although William Tell’s Chapel is commonplace and ugly now, people make pilgrimages to it more than ever. A boat brings these pilgrims to the historical spot. They go and flatten their faces a moment against the grating; they look at the altar and the frescoes which represent certain episodes, and then make their way to the little haven, and another boat comes to take them away again. In this way the pictures of the legend or chronicle are revived in a number of brains. Some of these people see Gessler’s hat, the father aiming at the apple on his son’s head. Others see William Tell pushing back into the storm the boat that has brought the Austrian tyrant, or killing him at Küssnacht with his

second arrow. All these pictures generate sensations and fresh feelings, and all that serves in making life, still more life. We are here on earth specially for that.

On seeing Switzerland so peaceable at present, it is really difficult to imagine that its heights used to bristle with feudal castles, with fortified towers, with dominating abbeys, that there was even a fleet of war ships on its beautiful Lake Leman and that its blue waters were dyed with the blood of warfare. All this makes one appreciate the hotels, funiculars and steamers, which have replaced the other order of things. Our ancéstors did not see the poetry of barbarity, but we see it. We do not feel the poetry of our civilisation, but our descendants will feel it.

Switzerland makes us forgetful of the Swiss. We admire its natural beauties and we know nothing of the men who live in the mountain châlets, in the farms nestling in the valleys, or in the town dwellings. It does not even occur to us that we should be grateful to those who have built us comfortable hotels on the high summits, those who, by their daring work, have enabled us to breathe the purer air which is a necessity to us. We must admit that the natives have not the gift of making themselves liked instantaneously. In France, the people are naturally pleasant. In Switzerland, they are just as naturally not pleasant. Their real innate kindness is hidden under a rough manner. They are ungracious. It seems to me that amiability would make their strong build seem somewhat ridiculous. On going direct to Switzerland from Italy, one is struck by the difference that may exist between races living so close together. The Italian *employé* leaves you with a pleasant bow, frequently wishing you a *buon viaggio*. The German-Swiss *employé*, with his square shoulders, high

colour and well-fed look, will enter your carriage, in a rough way, and ask for your ticket in such a tone that you always feel inclined to refuse to show it to him. With the Italians, travelling is more agreeable. With the Swiss, it is safer. It would be better if we could have agreeable *and* safe travelling. If we had perfection, though, in this world, we should want imperfection. It is certainly better then to go on wishing for perfection.

Thanks to its geographical position, its economic situation, and also to its chivalrous sentiments, Switzerland is hospitable. The Swiss are no better than the French, though, for opening the doors of their homes, and consequently we do not know them, or rather, we do not know them well. I am obliged, therefore, to proceed by induction.

They are very difficult to know, too, as nothing resembles one Swiss person less than another Swiss person. There are twenty-two species of them, that is, as many species as there are Cantons, and their characteristics are those of the German, Romansch and Italian races. This alone provides fine elements of discord.

The various Cantons do not like each other, do not understand each other and are terribly jealous of one another. They all keep on good terms though, as they have a mutual respect for their liberty, a few traits in common and a deep love for their country, which exists, thanks to their union.

The Swiss are usually well-educated, brought up in a *bourgeois* manner and very much attached to their family. They have more religious sentiment than religion. They are deliberate, tenacious, careful, very rarely generous and extremely timid. From a social point of view, they are not brilliant, and yet, in their



conversation there is a more or less keen vein of humour and of irony. There is a curious depth of romanticism in them, which will lead them on to passion, make them commit follies, and will cause them to be very faithless or very constant in love or friendship.

If natives of Berne, they will be distinctly *tudesque*, authoritative, didactical, but very energetic and thoroughly well disciplined. A man will put his heels together when taking leave of women and, in shaking hands, will move his shoulders up and down with an automatic, military gesture which reminds one of Prussia.

If he is only German, he will be good-tempered, frank, jocular and naïvely vain.

If a native of Switzerland be of the Romansch race, that is, Celtic, he is more refined in his tastes, broader-minded, he has more intuition, is fonder of pleasure and less correct and less active.

If he should be Italian-Swiss, he will have the German heaviness and the Latin shrewdness. These varied traits mark the soul of the country, like the coloured veins that run through wood or hard stone.

The Swiss woman is of a very characteristic type. One rarely likes her at first, but one feels nevertheless that she is somebody. She is either an intellectual woman or a housewife, and sometimes she is both. In my opinion, she is neither provincial nor yet a Philistine, as her liberal education preserves her from that. She is *bourgeoise*, *bourgeoise* in her rigidness, in her clear-sightedness, in her common sense. She has a Calvinistic or Protestant mentality, her soul is more spiritualistic than metaphysical. This somewhat dry foundation is softened by her good-heartedness, her humaneness, and frequently by a generous temperament, a certain ideal-

ism and even a romantic vein. I have always found the Swiss woman either very weak and very indolent, or very strong and very energetic. Without having the masculinity of the Englishwoman, she is generally lacking in charm and in grace.

In Switzerland, as in all mountainous countries, human beauty is rare and people have not yet learnt to cultivate it. The women know nothing of art, either in their toilet and their manners, in love or in life. Woman there is Nature . . . as much as her sex allows her to be. All this gives her a very strongly defined individuality, which she never loses. The Romanic woman may have an absolutely French culture, but she is not French at all, not even Latin. She is Celtic. Each Canton has a different feminine type. The Fribourg woman, with her Catholic mentality, has more soul, more intuition, more amiability and more warm rays. The Neufchâtel woman, with her foreign and royalistic traditions, is more cosmopolitan. The woman of Geneva is more worldly, more brilliant and elegant than the woman of Lausanne, but less congenial. There is always a little moral east-wind about her. When shaking hands, I could distinguish a Genevese from a Vaudois woman with my eyes shut. Among the German women there is the same diversity of character. With these women of the Confederation I can distinguish those who have a sharp, gentle or blunt disposition, and I am not in the least surprised at their lack of mutual affection. They criticise each other to their heart's content, they are even jealous of each other, but if anyone should say an unjust thing about Swiss women, they all feel it in a patriotic way.

Women did not make a great stir when claiming their

place side by side with men. They simply took their place there. For the last twenty years they have been going in for intense culture, and to their credit marriage has not interfered with this. They continue storing up science, philosophy and literature. They are snobbishly fond of knowledge.

The question is, what will all this combustible material produce? Will it be a beautiful flame, giving out light and warmth, or will it only produce smoke? The future will prove this for us. However it may be, they already have a voice in the chapter of social questions and their voice is heard far off. If Switzerland is the country where men and animals suffer least, it is due to the women. They may very well be satisfied to have won their laurels for this alone, whilst waiting for other things.

Foreigners would find it difficult to believe that Switzerland has an aristocracy. It has one nevertheless, a very exclusive and conservative one, and it is democratic as well, for the one does not prevent the other. This aristocracy does not descend from feudal families, as these have died out. It descends from old families who have made history, either in their own country or in the neighbouring countries, and these families have traditions. It is a very cultivated class and it attends zealously to public affairs. Its homes, full of precious souvenirs, have kept the atmosphere of the past.

The aristocracy receives the middle class, exchanges visits and cards, but does not consider that it belongs to its circle. The upper middle class treats the lower middle class in the same way.

It is like this in the best of Republics just as in the worst ones. Social barriers cannot be influenced by

politics. They are made of intangible things, of different education, of elements that cannot be changed, and all this is required by Nature.

Switzerland is proud of its aristocracy. Old families are the living parchments of the country. Snobbishness is rather rare here, and it is more ridiculous here than anywhere else.

It is currently said, and also without sufficient foundation, that Switzerland lives entirely on the tourist. This is not true. It has some trades which are in a very flourishing state, and its goods are in every market in the world. At any rate the tourist does not add anything to the intellectual worth of the country.

Switzerland is also frequently reproached with not having any artists. It has certainly contributed more to science than to art and it will probably always be thus, but its book of fame does not lack painters nor yet sculptors. Then, too, it only has about three million inhabitants, about the same population as Paris, and if we reckon the artists who are exclusively Parisian, we shall find that there are not very many, either.

In Switzerland, the fine arts are certainly appreciated. At Baden last summer, Handel's *Creation* was very well given. At Brugg, a little town in Argovia, the famous Meiningin Company gave Schiller's *Brant von Messina* out-doors. Two or three years ago, at Mézières, some peasants gave two dramas on the heights of the Jorat. They were written by a Swiss author and thirty thousand people went to see these plays: *La Dime* and *La Nuit des Quatre Temps*, although it was in the depth of winter.

In towns of a few thousand inhabitants, more or less rich Museums are to be found that are very well or-

ganised. The Swiss, too, have a great love of Nature. They are very keenly alive to the beauty of their country and are not blinded by the fact that they see it all the time. This proves that the sacred fire is smouldering in their souls.

I have just been studying the map of Europe. In the midst of all the great ant hills, I see two very small ones, Switzerland, coloured mauve and placed between Germany, Austria, Italy and France, and the other one, Holland, coloured yellow and planted between England and Germany. These two have been nicknamed "the buffer States." Their buffers, though, are made up of knowledge, of dearly bought experience, of dignity and of unalterable patriotism. In reality, these States are two powerful fortresses. Although it may not be apparent, their rôle has never been as active as now. The great currents of ideas pass through them uninterruptedly and at certain moments are concentrated there. On their free, neutral ground, congresses meet to discuss questions which interest all humanity. They then become centres of thought and of light, giving out rays which are seen from afar and helping on the general evolution. From one or other of them the ray of peace will emanate, perhaps, some day. Switzerland was the cradle of independence. Holland may perhaps be the cradle of peace. All blessings on the cradles of good people and beautiful things.

*Lausanne.*

Yesterday, on returning to my room after luncheon, I had a veritable thrill of pleasure and such thrills are rare events. My room was full of sunshine and, through the balcony window, which was wide open, the keen air from the lake and the mountains had come in,

as well as my familiar little guests, the sparrows. Some unknown hand had placed a bouquet of roses and a magnificent bunch of grapes on my table. Sunshine, pure air, birds, flowers and beautiful fruit! All this seemed to have been brought together there for me, within the space of a few square yards. With moist eyes, I picked up the enormous bunch of grapes. It was a masterpiece of beauty, perfect in design and colouring. Its transparent seeds, of an amber brown, seemed to be swollen with generous life. And this life had come up through the earth and was enriched with mineral matters, with organic acids. Thanks to the action of the air, of light and of warmth, this life had spread into the root, into the branches, into the leaves, into the wood itself and it was all concentrated there under a fine skin, awaiting other transformations.

And what quantities of invisible things, too, in that beautiful bunch of grapes. On the ribbon which was tied round the poor dry wood, I read Paderewski's name. It had come then from the estate that the great artist had bought at Morges for his invalid boy. It was the product then of genius, of music and of paternal love. I do not know whether it was due to this idea and the help of my imagination that the grapes certainly had a different taste. Never had any seemed of such exquisite flavour before. The more the sense of life penetrates, the more savour it has.

The next effect of this delightful surprise was to make me regret all the more my approaching departure. It was with a heavy heart, therefore, that I began to take down my tent, as the English say.

What obliges me to move on?

There is no apparent reason, but in reality it is that Will which we must all obey. I am short of *red thread*

for my weaving, and I must therefore go to the Château de Mortin, in the department of the Eure, in search of some. Fortunately it is no farther away than that. I want to see Maïa again. The physiological explanation which I gave to Pierre de Couzan disturbs my mind at times. I want to know, for my own satisfaction, whether all that I said to him was not mere literature, instead of Natural History. I do not think it was, but I want this proof among a thousand others. Rather cunningly I have roused Maïa's curiosity by writing to her and telling her that I spent the afternoon at Terriet with her husband. I shall therefore find her just ready. I can feel that the knot of my romance, whether real or imaginary, is getting tighter and tighter. I can feel the warmth of the accelerated movement, and this is delightful.

Thanks, I suppose, to Maïa's request, Madame Lasserre has invited me, in a kind, and indeed almost affectionate way, to spend a few days at Mortin. I have accepted the invitation, but all that does not prevent my feeling very sorry to leave my sparrows and the lake. My beloved little sparrows! I am bequeathing them to two young girls. They will have their seed in the morning, at noon and at four o'clock, but I shall not have them. I shall miss their wicked little black eyes terribly.

The lake has given me its Autumn soul, a soul full of contrasts, sometimes superbly serene, at other times stormy, warm and passionate like maturity, and then cold and tragic, like the decline of things. I shall come back, if I can, in search of its Spring soul.



**IV**

**CHATEAU DE MORTIN (EURE)**



## IV

### *Château de Mortin (Eure).*

WELL, I was not mistaken. Maïa's confession has edified me. I laughed to myself on hearing it, for it developed the Natural History lesson I had given to her husband, to perfection, and that delighted me. In spite of the early hour, I found my little friend at the station. She had been waiting for me some time in one of the corners of the automobile. She took me at once to her home in the Rue Vernet, and I had a delightful bath and an English breakfast. She had had the brilliant idea of having breakfast laid in her studio, in front of the high chimney-piece, and the wood was burning brightly in the grate. The table with the samovar singing, the cooked bacon, buttered toast and eggs, were in themselves a welcome. My seat was indicated by a bunch of violets on the table in front of it.

Maïa looked charming in her morning costume: a dark blue cloth skirt and short coat and a blouse of white silk. Her complexion is clear, her eyes limpid and her lips fresh. Her hair was loosely twisted and was still damp from her shower-bath. I looked at her in quite another way and was naïvely surprised, as we sometimes are. This pretty woman, eating her buttered toast with such a good appetite, had poisoned and completely spoiled a man's life, and it did not appear to have made any difference to her. The thing

seemed monstrous to me. She, on her side, was observing me and trying to find out if I knew—I felt that she was longing to hear me speak of her husband, but I wanted to make her question me. I was quite merciless in turning out all my bag of news and in adding a description of Pontarlier with the snow and moonlight.

“*À propos*, Granny,” she said at last, “tell me about your afternoon at Territet.”

The “*à propos*” amused me very much and all the more so as Baron de Couzan had commenced in the same way.

“Well, it was a very pleasant afternoon, for me, at any rate. I have not, I am sorry to say, a handsome man like M. de Couzan to escort me about every day. It is very flattering for an old woman, an escort of that kind.”

“And what did you talk about, with your handsome man?” she asked, with a certain irony.

“The Swiss manœuvres,” I answered wickedly.

“Ah.”

“Yes, he had been following them in his automobile, and he was most enthusiastic.”

“I hope you complimented him on his behaviour on the occasion of the shock of the meeting at Évian. He was very *chic*.”

“Oh, yes, I did. He was rather afraid that the meeting might have altered your good humour. I assured him that it did not. I told him about our Miellerie excursion and about our little Savoy feast. He was highly amused and, unless I am mistaken, he was sorry not to have been with us.”

I fancied I saw a fleeting expression of emotion on the face of my hostess.

“You are certainly mistaken,” she said rather drily,

and then, as though to cut short anything sentimental, she asked what had taken Madame de Couzan to Lausanne.

"Rheumatism in the eyes," I replied, "but nothing serious. What kind of a woman is she?" I asked. "I cannot imagine what she is like."

"Quite a country lady, if you can picture to yourself what that means. She is tall, slight and dark, with splendid black eyes."

"You did not get on well together, of course?" I asked.

"Well, it would have been incredible if we had got on well together. For twenty years she has been living on her Maunuit estate, an hour from Chambéry, and she makes the very best of it. When she used to come to Paris, she stayed at a convent. She knows absolutely nothing about the present epoch. She sees it through the eyes of her bishop and her priest. You can imagine how it looks to her. I was a surprise for her and a somewhat disagreeable surprise. As far as I was concerned, I did not dislike her, for she amused me. She is witty, good at repartee, so that there was always a sort of *clic-clac*, and that was amusing. Added to all that, she is energetic and cannot be influenced. She is very authoritative. Her son had plenty to inherit with such a mother. You should have seen her, at the time of the elections, stirring up a poor timid priest and sending him to the free-thinkers, right into the mouth of the wolf. She is a hard, pious woman just as my mother is a gentle, pious woman."

"Oh, I know her now," I said, smiling. "By the bye, what could you have told your mother to make her invite me so heartily and in such a kind way?"

"Nothing; she guesses you have a good influence

over me and she is grateful. I fancy, too, that you inspire her with a certain curiosity. I noticed that she was very much disturbed when reading one of your books. She closed it with a sigh, but she opened it over and over again. She fears that you are not very orthodox and she will try to make sure. Take care."

"I admire your mother very much," I said.

"Oh, she is a love!"

This expression, although not very respectful, seemed to come from the daughter's heart.

During the rest of breakfast time we did not speak of M. de Couzan again, but in our conversation we touched on many different subjects in an agreeable way.

"What a beautiful study you have!" I said, looking round at the large room, in which pictures, books, objects of art and flowers all harmonised so well together. Maïa shrugged her shoulders.

"Yes, you ought to have it," she said.

"And why?" I asked.

I was just sitting down to the writing table.

"You do more good at this table than I do at mine," I said. "Every one of these drawers is a proof of what I say," I added, touching the bright knob of one of them. "A society woman is a power. When she uses her influence, as you do, in helping the humble, she is working for the whole of society."

"I can assure you there is no merit in helping the humble. It makes life so interesting."

"I am not complimenting you, my dear child, I am congratulating you on having received such a fine rôle. It is just what I should have liked. Would you exchange it for that of a happy wife, a very happy wife?"

"Sometimes I would, Granny . . . yes, some-

times," replied my hostess with a pathetic smile. " And yet I think it would be impossible now for me to only think of myself and of my own people. I must meddle with other people's affairs now, and manipulate their lot for them. It gives me the sensation that I am really making life, to use your expression."

" Well, it may be that Providence simply took your happiness away from you just as one takes a toy away from a child, because it prevents the child from learning what it must learn. Providence will give it you back when it would no longer be an obstacle and prevent your doing the work you are intended to accomplish."

" Do you think that?" said Madame Lasserre ironically. " It would really be very kind of Providence, but — I have no confidence, myself."

She then put her arm through mine and said:

" Let us go and get ready for our journey. The train starts at half past twelve and we shall reach Mortin at tea-time."

" Very well," I replied.

When once we were in the train I laid my hand on that of my companion and said:

" Ten years ago, Maïa, when a certain woman entered your compartment. . . ."

" Attracted by my dog's beautiful eyes . . . ." she continued.

" Yes," I said, " you made a grimace. . . ."

" A grimace!"

" Yes."

" Ah, well, I little thought that it was a friend on her way to me."

" And now that woman is your guest. She is travelling again with you on the same line, but with the

locomotive turned towards Mortin. Life has some fine combinations sometimes."

"It more often has very cruel and abominable ones."

"Yes, but they are all interesting, because they are a part of a predetermined plan. The Will that urged me on towards you at Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray knew your future and mine. It knew that you were to marry."

"And very badly."

"That I was to write."

"And to write well."

I repeated the word "well" with a smile, blinking my eyes at the same time.

"Our meeting came about thanks to all these circumstances. It is very wonderful, and it may be still more wonderful," I added in a low voice.

Maïa looked surprised; but she did not ask me what I was hoping. This was fortunate, as I could not have told her. The sentence had left my lips as the words do a gramophone. The phenomenon is frequent, but I had not long noticed it. Someone came into our compartment from the smoking carriage and our conversation stopped short. For the rest of the journey we only spoke of the Autumn landscape we saw from the windows.

Madame Lasserre sat in the corner facing me and her face was in full daylight. I compared it with the face of the young girl, whose bright, happy expression had struck me. It looked to me strangely sad when in repose. Around the eyes I noticed, for the first time, a hollowness, that hollowness which so often reveals a woman in love. A sudden anxiety took possession of me and the elegant figure of M. de Berges came to my mind.

M. De Berghes! Oh, I should not approve of him at all!

From time to time Maïa looked at me furtively. I could see the curiosity in her blue pupils and I could also see anguish in them, and a certain shame. I felt both pity and anger for her. We only went as far as Louviers, in order to avoid changing a second time. We found not only the automobile at the station but M. Lasserre too, and Dr. Henri, as he is called.

"The father and the uncle," said Maïa, in a joking tone by way of introduction. The father and the uncle were two tall men, Normans undoubtedly by their energetic faces, which had been refined by culture and a superior education. This was my first impression. We looked full at each other for a few seconds and our mutual liking was expressed in the way we shook hands.

The automobile soon made short work of the two hours' distance between Louviers and Mortin. At the end of a long, wide avenue of beech-trees I could see the Château in the distance, standing out well and preceded by a court-yard with railings all round it. The setting sun gilded its brickwork and stone as it had done for hundreds of years, made its window-panes glitter, and showed up in relief the beautiful lines of its Louis XIII architecture.

Maïa was watching my face to see the effect it produced on me.

"Ah, you like it," she cried joyfully, "I am very glad!"

"Who could help liking it!" I answered.

In the hall I found my hostess and the Aurannes, a Franco-English couple I had met at Baden. The warmth and simplicity of the welcome I received broke

the ice at once. Madame Lasserre took me to my room.

"You are to have the 'Bishop's room,'" said Maïa who was in front of us. "Mother is no doubt giving it to you in the hope of converting you."

"Alas, I have never converted anyone, not even my daughter," said Madame Lasserre. "I have given it to you simply because it has the sunshine."

I looked in delight round the sitting-room which was built in the corner of the house. The walls were covered with pale green brocade. There were pictures, miniatures and old furniture, superb flowers and a bright wood fire, the flames of which were dancing on the silk of the chairs. The bedroom certainly looked rather ecclesiastical, with its praying-chair surmounted by a crucifix. The bath-room with all modern appliances, which had been added, produced an agreeable anachronism.

"Are you trying to make me have a horror of my hotel bed-room?" I asked my hostesses.

"You never will have a horror of anything," declared Maïa, "because in your hotel bed-room, you have what you love better than anything else — liberty. You do not know her, Mamma," continued Maïa. "You might think she was very sociable, but all at once she feels a need of escaping and then she makes off with herself."

"We will be very discreet," said Madame Lasserre, with a kind smile; "we will leave you as free as possible and will do all we can so that you may not 'make off with yourself,' as my daughter so elegantly puts it, for some time to come."

At tea time, at bridge afterwards and then at dinner I came into contact with my hosts and their friends

and the contact was most agreeable. At half past nine I went to my room and Maïa accompanied me.

"Are you very tired, Granny?" she asked.

"If I had spent three nights in the train, my dear, I would not rest until you had satisfied my curiosity."

"Is it as irresistible as all that, your curiosity?" she asked, blushing but with a provoking smile, a smile that goes from her lips to her cheek-bones and then breaks into light.

"Yes, just as irresistible," I replied. "Put on your dressing-gown. I will put on mine and we will sit and talk by this beautiful fire."

"I should love that," she answered.

She soon came back accompanied by Pick who looked very joyful.

"Was he in the plan?" she asked in a mocking way.

"Certainly," I replied. "There are very few human lives, in which dogs, horses, cats and birds do not have some little rôle."

"The animals that feed and clothe us have a famous rôle I should think," she remarked.

"Yes, and yet we do not give them a thought."

"We are savages!" exclaimed Maïa. She was wearing an adorable creation of white crêpe-de-chine, cut square at the neck and finished with a guipure jacket, all trimmed with pale green ribbon.

"Is that what you call a dressing-gown?" I asked, smiling.

"A house gown if you like that better. You must see me in all my transformations. One is not the same in a short dress as in a long one, in a day dress as in an evening dress."

"In which do you feel more at home?"

"In a short dress."

"I am not surprised at that, for it lends itself better to activity than to coquetry."

"It even makes one forget that."

I looked at her in admiration and then I pictured Pierre de Couzan beside her. I put my two hands on her shoulders and shook her.

"How could you?" I said.

Pick, thinking that I was attacking his mistress, sprang at me, barking wildly.

"Down, down, good dog," said Maïa, laughing. "I am only being punished and perhaps I deserve it."

"Yes, how could you deceive Monsieur de Couzan?"

"I, deceive Monsieur Couzan! I!" exclaimed Maïa with a comic expression of horror.

"You told him something that was untrue, I would wager."

"You are perhaps mistaken."

"Sit down and prove that to me."

Maïa sat down in the huge arm-chair to the right of the fireplace.

"What did Monsieur de Couzan tell you?" she asked, in a nervous manner, twisting one of her ribbons round her finger.

"Nothing that a gentleman could not tell," I answered.

"I am sure of that, but what was it?"

"He told me the nice speech you made the day after your marriage."

A wave of emotion tinged Maïa's neck and face.

"And you were indignant and amazed, I suppose," she said.

"Amazed, yes. You told me at Évian that you had chosen your husband without any coercion. Your declaration to him could not have been true, then."

"Oh, yes, it was true and more than true—at the time I said it. I am glad that you know, as that will make my confession more easy. Perhaps you can help me to understand myself. That is just the difficult thing, to understand one's self."

"You see, Granny," she continued, clasping her hands round her knees, "in our class, which is supposed to be so refined, marriage is more barbarous and more brutal than in the lower classes of society. With us, a young man does not say: 'I want to marry.' He says: 'They are going to marry me.' That is more *chic*. He does not take the trouble to look round himself for his companion, for the future mother of his children. Other people find her for him. Do you know of anything more ridiculous than that? She is found for him and he accepts her in all good faith. Is it not idiotic, Oriental and everything else absurd? As to the girl, she would like to choose her husband, but she is told that that is not her business. It really is then the parents who contract the marriage and not their children. And certain idealists would like it to be indissoluble. The wretches! There is no preparation for this act, although it is the most important one in life. There are plenty of prepartives. During the time of the engagement there is nothing but trying on, visits to the dressmakers, milliners, seamstresses and there are all kinds of useless worries. I can assure you that long before my marriage I had had enough of all my frills and furbelows, my wonderful trousseau, my presents from people I did not care for and from snobs of all kinds. One is so overdone and worn out with all this, that one is apt to forget the individual who is to be, according to you, 'the Master of the Hour.'"

"Oh, I did not invent the title, I am sorry to say," I interrupted. "I was most careful to put it in inverted commas when I used it, as it is an expression used by the Arabs."

"It is admirable and it means so much," said Maïa, looking fixedly at the blaze from the fire. "'The Master of the Hour,'" she repeated. "Yes, it is quite right. And no one thinks of that. People only see the ceremony, the altar bright with light, the church filled with people, the apotheosis. Alas, the apotheosis often ends, as it does at the theatre, in smoke and nothingness."

"Had you no idea, no intuition of what marriage meant?" I asked.

"If I were to say none at all, it would not be true," replied Maïa, looking at me quite frankly. "I scented a mystery, and something within me knew, but I myself, Maïa, was so ignorant that in a Turkish country my value would have been greatly increased. I will give you a proof. The night before the famous day, I went to say 'Good-night' to Miss Lang. She was terribly upset,—her nose showed her emotion more than the rest of her face. She did not attempt any platitudes, but kept saying, 'God bless you, God bless you' from the depths of her heart. A childish idea suddenly came to my mind.

"'Do not close your door,'" I said to her. "'I am coming back.' Can you imagine how I went back?"

"No," I answered.

"In my grand night-dress, the one I was to wear the following night. I put on a wonderful dressing-gown and went back to Miss Lang. 'The rehearsal,' I said gaily, as I entered her room. She turned crim-

son and then pale. Her eyes filled with tears and she would not admire me. She took me by the shoulders and pushed me towards the door, saying, ‘Go to bed, child, go to bed,’ as she had done many a time during my childhood. Later on, she told me that she felt like a criminal that night, and I told her that she was one. I could scarcely have forgiven my parents, if I had not remembered a conversation that I overheard the day before my wedding. I was very tired and had thrown myself down on the sofa in my mother’s bedroom and gone to sleep there. On waking, I heard my uncle’s voice in the drawing-room, which is next to my mother’s. ‘She ought to have been told six months ago,’ he was saying; ‘it is too late now. You would upset her to no purpose. She would have just forty-eight hours for seeing life as it is and with her character—’ ‘She is in love with Pierre,’ interrupted my father, ‘and he adores her. He is a thorough gentleman. Oh, it will all be right. She will do as other women do.’ ‘I should have liked her to do better than other women,’ said my uncle drily. ‘We must wait for the next generation, I suppose.’ Dear Uncle, he was quite right.”

“But you were in love with Pierre de Couzan, were you not?” I asked, looking into Maïa’s eyes.

“Ah, that is just the question, Granny. Do not imagine that I want to pose as a woman quite out of the common, with a complex nature, and all that sort of thing. I do not even yet know what my feelings for him really were. I liked him better than any other man and I should have been very grieved to give him up. I fancied that the fascination he exercised over me was love and great love even, and this made me seem quite interesting to myself. . . . In spite

of this, when I received the law from him, my whole being rose in revolt and, governed by an irresistible impulse, a desire to be myself again, I told him that I did not love him, that I should never love him, and that I had married him for the sake of getting my freedom.

"When I heard my own words, they sounded odious to me. Just at first he took them as a spoilt child's nonsense. Everyone had a mania for treating me as a spoilt child. I therefore repeated them, knowing quite well what I was saying. I repeated them in an evil humour. Those words traced one of those white lines, between M. de Couzan and me, which mark the sides at tennis and make two players into two adversaries. The line kept increasing in width. I was not only ignorant with regard to marriage, but I knew nothing of man, of his temperament, his vanity, his animal pride. When I found myself shut up in the conjugal cage with him, I wanted to play with him and I paid dearly for doing so."

"All the harm came from the fact that you were neither ready for love nor for marriage. I guessed that it was so. You have known the 'Master' but you have not yet known the 'Hour'."

A beautiful blush spread slowly over Maïa's face and neck and she rubbed her fingers nervously together.

"Yes, that is it," she murmured.

I repeated, for her benefit, the lesson in Natural History with which I had enriched M. de Couzan's mind. Maïa listened to me with wide-open eyes, her nostrils dilating and her lips forming a straight line.

"Then that is the cause of the crimes which are attributed to passion?"

"Of course," I said.

"Life is a horror!"

She uttered these words with a childish anger that was most droll.

"Do not be blasphemous!" I said.

"Ah, do you not think it is frightful to have, within one's self, contrary forces which at a certain moment may completely upset one, forces that one cannot control by one's own will?"

"Because the will is not sufficiently cultivated, particularly with women. All that will come in time. Your first feeling of revolt does not surprise me, but what surprises me is that when once you had come to yourself, you did not try to make things right again."

"I did try, Granny, I did try. I was not always as disagreeable as all that," she added, with that smile of hers that reaches to the cheek-bones, and her face flushing again, "but I had to contend with a nature still more proud than mine. Monsieur de Couzan can forgive, but I do not think he could forget. I never saw the same expression on his face as before my outburst. The husband was as different as possible from the *fiancé*. Then, too, the incompatibility between us was so evident. My independent character offended my lord and master. As regards women, he had only known those men's dolls that can neither think nor reflect. When he saw a girl of nineteen accept love as a mere *hors d'œuvre* and then ask for more substantial food, that is for the right to share in the struggle of life, he was bewildered . . . and disgusted. It upset all his poetical ideas, the pleasant little ideal of the submissive wife that his ancestors had manufactured for him. Oh, I can tell you, I was a revelation to him!"

I could not help smiling as she said this.

"Where did you spend the first weeks of your marriage?" I asked her.

"At Maunuit. My mother-in-law had emigrated to her brother's house. Maunuit means 'bad night.' That is rather comic, is it not?" she said with a nervous laugh.

"After a fortnight there," she went on, "we started for Italy. This was on the first of May. When once there, I soon saw that my husband's ideas were not as advanced as mine.

"Oh, what a disappointment that Italy was, about which I had always been dreaming. Without being aware of it, my mentality was that of a humanist and a modernist. That word was perhaps not invented, but the thing existed. The humanist felt and admired the art which had made human beauty divine. The modernist was disgusted at the falseness and childishness of Christian art. The Madonnas had the effect on me of so many common daughters of the people who had been told to look down and to put on a modest air. The halo, which was sometimes on the right, sometimes on the left and sometimes on the front of the head, irritated me. Raphael's *Marriage of the Virgin* seemed grotesque to me, on account of the attitude and the costumes of the personages. One of them is breaking a stick with his knee, whilst St. Joseph is putting the wedding ring on Mary's finger. Are you shocked?" asked Maia, breaking off.

"Not at all. I had the same impression, many years ago."

"Ah, I am glad to hear that."

"I kept my thoughts to myself as though they were

criminal. At present, Christian art seems just as artificial and just as childish to me, but I feel its soul, and its naïveness completely disarms me."

"It did not disarm me. I wanted Madonnas who really looked like virgins. I wanted Christs that looked like the God-man, and saints with transfigured faces and no halo. My companion admired everything in the old spirit. He was indignant at my heresy and looked on me as a veritable Philistine. Fortunately it was in the Spring, the old walls were covered with roses and there was a divine melancholy about the Roman Campagna. I felt God's Italy and de Couzan felt the Italy of man. This is just to prove to you that assimilation was by no means easy.

"In the country we were nearer to each other — we both liked the open air, riding and walking. There was always a slight current of hostility between us though, a sort of unacknowledged displeasure. I was quite well aware of my husband's qualities. He was a gentleman, he was very humane, generous —"

"And you could not find a way of being happy with him when he was all that?" I exclaimed.

"It takes a great many things to make happiness, or rather," said Maia, speaking slowly, "it only needs one thing. At any rate things went from bad to worse. I had always prided myself on having a golden disposition. I do not know into what metal it had become transmuted, but I grew irritable, as grumpy as an old cat, and my gaiety disappeared. At the end of the year I had serious grievances against Monsieur de Couzan. He began to go to his Club a great deal, to stay out late and then to gamble. He only returned at the early hours of night or rather morning. Anger kept me awake, I could not go to sleep until I had heard

him open the street door. I have had all the enjoyment of a gambler's wife and I can assure you that there is not much pleasure in it."

"Monsieur de Couzan owned that he had not always been a very agreeable husband," I said.

"It is very nice of him to own it," remarked Maïa ironically. "Joking apart, Granny, I suffered a great deal and, considering that I was not accustomed to hardships, I had a great deal of patience. Finally we both agreed with each other, but it was to have a divorce. Considering the circumstances it was the wisest thing possible. We might both of us have been tempted to search for happiness outside home—in a way which never succeeds by the bye—but it would have been letting ourselves down. In our common disaster we have, at any rate, saved our honour. You know what my mother's opinions and principles are, so that you can imagine what this divorce has been for her. It made me realise that there is some good in religion," said Maïa in a droll way.

"My father and uncle accepted the thing as men who know what life is," she continued.

"In less than three months, everything was settled. Our efforts to get this affair through were quite touching. I cannot describe to you the feeling of deliverance when I actually held in my hands my divorce certificate. That same evening I went back to the Rue Vernet and, taking off my hat, I said aloud: 'Alone at last!' making a parody of the famous words. It seemed to me that I had not breathed freely for three years. Monsieur de Couzan and I had been driven, like a stream and a river, into the same bed. We had never united though. He had remained grey and I blue. We had rolled along stormily, making a diabolical uproar.

Now that we are separated, we each live peacefully and even usefully."

"Yes, but are you both happy?"

"Oh, that is a detail," replied Maïa, briefly.

Just at this moment Jenny, the housemaid, knocked at the door and then came in with a tray on which were two cups and some biscuits.

"The Doctor has sent this," she said.

"It is our night-cap," remarked Maïa, "egg-nog, an American drink, composed of whipped eggs, sugar, rum, cognac or champagne. This is flavoured with rum. Taste it."

I tasted and found that it was exquisite.

Maïa stood up and, leaning against the mantel-shelf, with the light falling on her, drank her stimulant slowly.

"There, Granny," she said, "you have had a pathetic story of a bad marriage."

"Of a good marriage spoilt by . . ."

"By what?"

"By undisciplined forces . . ."

"And, according to you, it is God who makes marriages?"

"According to me? but everyone thinks so —"

"All marriages?" asked Maïa, "sensible and absurd ones, rich and poor — noble and ignoble ones? . . ."

"Of course. The act of transmission, the act which continues the work of the 'seven days' could only be the will of God."

Maïa put her glass down and looked at me with an expression of amazement and amusement.

"The act of transmission! Well, you do find some euphemisms! I shall remember that one!"

"It is not at all a figure of speech, I assure you," I said. "It is the real, scientific word, the one which

gives the true sense of that divine thing, so immense that we do not yet understand it — and consequently we speak of it like savages."

"Fortunately the act of transmission is not always fertile."

"It always is," I replied promptly.

Maïa gazed for an instant at the blaze in the fire-place. She then looked up at me gravely.

"Yes," she said, "you are right, it is always fertile." I rose and Maïa glanced at the clock.

"Half past eleven!" she exclaimed. "Send me away at once. I am a nice hostess to keep you up so late." She put her arm round my shoulders and took me into my bed-room.

"You have done me a great deal of good this evening," she said, "more than you can imagine. I had felt what you have told me in a vague way. For the last four years, I have been busy with this skein, but I could not get it out of a mess."

"Getting skeins out of a mess is the rôle of grandmothers!" I answered.

Maïa took my hand in hers and kissed it.

"Well, now, do not go and like Monsieur de Couzan better than me. I should not allow that — and besides, he does not deserve it."

"I am not so sure of that."

"*Granny, how dare you!* Well, I hope my stories will not give you the nightmare and that you will sleep well in the bishop's bed," she said, patting the beautiful pillows vigorously. At the door she lifted Pick up and made me kiss him.

"The mistress and the dog wish you a very good night," she said gaily.

Ah, no, her stories will not give me the nightmare.

I have discovered an infinite number of things in them that delight me. There is enough in them to transform the Autumn moth into a Spring butterfly.

*Château de Mortin.*

Mortin is one of the most beautiful human habitations imaginable. It is not precisely imposing and yet it has a very dignified aspect. One of its façades looks on to the court-yard and the other on to the park. This park round the château reminds one of Versailles. Further from the house it gets more bushy and is gradually transformed into a wood, where, as Maïa says, they kill and cut down as little as possible. Beyond the wood there is a huge forest.

The rooms of the house are large, with high ceilings which are either painted or decorated. The old tapestries, the Louis XV wood-work, the staircase of imposing design, all give to the whole house a dignified but warm aspect. The electric wires run along the mouldings invisibly, cleverly hidden pipes carry water and heat into the different rooms and the fire which burns under the monumental chimney-pieces has no other mission than to give light and gaiety.

I have now been here a week and I am still going about admiring the objects of art, the pictures and the furniture of pure eighteenth century style. I have never before had such a treat. I detest museums. I am obliged to go to them now and again in search of beauty, but they always make me sad. The masterpieces shut up there seem to me outside life, as it were. They lack human contact. Perfection always has a freezing atmosphere around it. I leave that to be explained by anyone who is capable of explaining it.

The exquisite things contained in the house at Mor-

tin seem quite familiar objects to me. I delight in looking at them, in touching the cupboards of violet wood with bronze mountings, the little writing tables so exquisitely finished and the secretaries with lacquered panels picked out with gold. I sit down with childish pleasure on the sofas of Beauvais or Aubusson tapestry. I try the comfortable chairs, on the arms of which the women of their epoch must have rested their beautiful hands. There has been an attempt made to place these Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI chairs in a modern way. In that I recognise Maïa. It has taken away the frigid look of the large drawing-room. A few beautiful screens make little corners for conversation. There is a grand piano, a harpsichord, rose-wood furniture, books and card tables. Every person has his or her favourite seat and this room is the general meeting place. There are plants everywhere, even in the library, and beautiful foliage and flowers put life into everything.

Mortin is what I should call a real château and, comparatively speaking, it is on a modest scale. There are no more servants than necessary. In the stables and coach house are twelve horses and three automobiles. The out-buildings, which must formerly have been used for a much more splendid retinue, are admirably arranged at present, both for the servants and for the animals. This simplicity, in the midst of luxury, makes the old dwelling seem homelike and charming.

Mortin has belonged to the Lasserres since 1610. At my request Maïa introduced her ancestors to me. She did this in a most amusing way, pointing to each of them with Pick's whip. On the masculine side, there are councillors of the Parliament of Normandy, a President of the *Chambre des Comptes*, a *Procureur général*,

a Bishop and some financiers. Their faces give one an impression of thoughtful force, of energy and of rather shrewd cleverness. On the feminine side there are some very stiff, provincial *grandes dames*, with austere looking faces, a few young faces that are very sweet, with a coquettish look in the corner of the eye and the arch smile peculiar to the eighteenth century. I glanced from them to their descendant. She stood there in her twentieth-century costume, a short skirt and jacket, with her hands behind her back. A ray of sunshine fell upon her, showing up in relief her bold, and at the same time supple, outline and her self-willed face.

The contrast was so great that I could not help smiling.

"What is amusing you?" she asked.

"The idea that the descendant of these grave-looking magistrates, and of these puritanical, submissive women should be a modernist such as you are."

Maïa shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, all these good people must have evolved without knowing it. It is rather annoying for them to end with the distaff. My father wanted a boy so badly. He might have detested me, but it appears that he at once liked the wretched little scrap of a girl they put in his arms. Of course there was still hope for better things, but,—the better things never came and he went on liking me. I disappointed him a second time in not giving him the grandson he was counting on, and yet he has still gone on adoring me. Poor Father, I suppose that adoring me has become a habit now."

Maïa broke off and threw a kiss to her father's portrait.

"In this portrait painted by D. B——," she continued, "you see the warm colouring peculiar to the Las-

serres, their tall, squarely built figure. The artist has rendered the values which characterise them admirably. There are the strongly marked eyebrows, the expression of the light blue eyes, eyes that seem to be specially adapted for seeing distances, for seeing what is coming, like those of sailors. Then there is the energetic turn of the moustache, the kindness and the delicate sensuality of the lips, the tenacity of the financier's jaw."

"No one would take that man for '*a grand seigneur* of no importance,'" I said, smiling.

"No, indeed. Oh, Father has a good burden of responsibility, but that does not trouble me, for he is quite capable. I have no modesty as far as he is concerned, for I am very proud of him."

"You may well be!" I answered.

"And Uncle, my big Uncle, as I used to call him when I was a child, what do you think of him?"

Dr. Henri's portrait was also painted by D. B——. He is of the same build as his elder brother, but his figure is more sturdy. It would seem impossible for two brothers to be as alike and yet so unlike. It is as though Nature had wanted to create variations of the same type, and I can imagine the pleasure the artist must have had in rendering them. The face seems to stand out from the canvas, thanks to the intensity of the expression. The hair and the short beard are of a light brown, somewhat faded in colour and turning grey. Under the well-shaped forehead and the thick eyebrows, the dark blue eyes have a profound expression and he has the exquisite smile peculiar to severe mouths. His face does not reflect the joy, but rather the serenity of the heights.

"The father sees men," I said, "and the uncle humanity."

"That is just it, Granny, that is exactly it. Now here is Mother."

In the portrait, painted some ten years previously by C——, Madame Lasserre is wearing a Princess dress of black velvet, trimmed with valuable guipure, and a fur stole on her shoulders. There is a fine dignity about the whole figure. The thick hair is slightly powdered and worn on the top of the head. In the dark eyes, fringed with long lashes, there is a fervent, loving expression and remarkable firmness about the mouth.

"Your mother is here exactly, on this canvas," I said to Maïa, "she is here morally and physically and she is superb."

"Can you tell me where she gets the Spanish type, for she certainly has it?"

"I have often met with it in Burgundy," I replied. "That poor duchy behaved rather badly in the days of yore and the traces of its adventures have not yet disappeared. But," I said, turning to Maïa, "I do not see your portrait here, where is it?"

"I am waiting until I am thirty, until I have attained the culminating point of my perfections, before I have it painted. It will go finally, with all the Lasserves, to the Rouen Museum. It is curious that a race should finish like that, as though it were just cut off!"

"That it should finish!" I said, "but I do not believe it will, at all. Nature knows its business better than that. You will see what a fine graft it will make with you."

A slight blush and a gleam of pleasure lighted up Maïa's face for an instant.

"Granny," she said, "you have ideas that belong to the other world."

"No, my dear child, they belong to this one. How

is it, though," I asked, "that your uncle has not married?"

"It seems that he had a great trouble when he was about thirty years of age. A woman he loved, a foreigner, died in a very tragic way. It was after that that he devoted himself to Science and it has filled his life so thoroughly that he has remained faithful to it. He keeps up the dispensary I told you of in Paris, and there are two doctors always there. When he is in Paris, he goes himself every day. Then at L——, not far from the sea, he has two farms that he calls 'The Shelter,' where about twenty children are brought up. These children are all little outcasts. Some of them are more or less tainted, the others are perfectly healthy. He doctors the former and watches over the others. He studies them all physiologically and psychologically. He declares that of all the species that people the globe, the human species is the least known."

"Yes, and yet it is judged, condemned, glorified and tended by people who know nothing of it. That is the terrible part."

"Providence, Granny, Providence!"

"Ah, yes."

"If you like we will go to 'The Shelter' for a week this Spring and you shall see for yourself the work Uncle is doing. You will see that my admiration is quite justified."

"I am sure it is," I said, smiling.

With all these portraits of the Lasserres before me, I could understand something of the place to which I had been brought and I could thus get into communication with my hosts more easily. They interest me keenly.

It is a somewhat rare treat for me to be able to talk

to thoughtful men who are also men of action. M. Lasserre is at the head of one of the largest financial houses of France. In his rich, full voice, there is unconscious authority. It is a voice to which one listens. The clearness and precision of his words delight me and are at the same time my despair, for they make me realise what the feminine mind lacks. At Mortin he is merely a sportsman and a country gentleman. In spite of this, I often say to myself as I look at him, that behind that forehead, there is a marvellous calculating apparatus and brain cells of enormous radiating power, and he then seems a formidable person to me.

A human being's forehead fascinates me now. One evening, in the hall of the hotel, I could not take my eyes from Richard Strauss's forehead. I realised that above those thick eyebrows, there was a whole orchestra, the sound of the violoncello, of violins and of harps, and I was wonder-struck, as I should have been at a miracle.

Such foreheads are the real royal foreheads.

As to Dr. Henri, thanks to Maïa's information, I liked him, but I little thought to find in a man of science such universality, such humour and human sympathy.

He is brusque and even somewhat rough, but such brusqueness and roughness, when tempered by education, are not disagreeable. He is essentially magnetic, as an American woman would say. He is magnetic by his voice, by his glance, by the superior forces within him.

From the very first moment, we began to talk to each other as though we had always known one another. It is ever thus with those who are placed under the same current of ideas.

Madame Lasserre would make a fine psychological

study. She seems to me a true *grande dame* and at the same time she is very provincial. She is a *grande dame* in her innate generosity and she is provincial in her lack of adapting herself, in her exaggerated respect of the conventionalities. She is naturally pleasant and, I fancy, she has more intuition than real intelligence. She has had the education that used to be given in good convents and she has supplemented it by reading and by the study of English, which she knows very well at present.

She is not a mind, but a soul, a somewhat mystical soul, which, thanks to a long atavism, has absolute faith. The Catholic dogma has opened the doors of an imaginary heaven to her, filled her heart with immortal hope and given her an unlimited field for her idealism. If it had not existed, she would have been capable of inventing it. She exercises all her faculties in her desire to conceive what God is like. She looks for Him above, in the world beyond, trusting to her own faculties instead of looking for Him in that work in which He is constantly revealed, in which He is living and visible. In her daring flights she misses that work.

She disdains our Earth, which is one of His tabernacles and she remains wrapped in her own dreams. Nothing will ever bring her out of these. Science, philosophy, political and social questions are discussed all around her. She hears ideas whizzing past her ears like arrows, ideas that might overthrow her beliefs, but she does not budge at all. The wind of modernism, violent though it may be, does not succeed, I am sure, in stifling the flame which her soul feeds, nor even in making it flicker.

She only reads books with the "right ideas." She only likes people with the "right ideas" and, by a cruel

irony, those who are nearest to her have not these "right ideas." She is alone in the midst of her own people, absolutely alone. This seems most pathetic to me. She must have adored her husband, but I doubt whether she ever dared, or knew how, to let him know it. It is evident that he is deeply attached to her.

Dr. Henri's magnetism acts visibly on my hostess. They address each other as "sister" and "brother," and this is very pretty. When she is too rigid he can make her unbend as no one else can. She is fully aware of his worth and, no matter what may be the point of discussion, she is always impressed by this.

In spite of everything, Madame Lasserre has a certain influence on her surroundings. There are subjects that are never discussed in her presence. On Friday, meat is not served. On Sundays, half the servants go to the private religious service in the château and the other half to the neighbouring Church.

In the whole atmosphere of the house her mind can be felt, and it gives a touch of austerity which harmonises well with the place and with things generally. Mortin has no other guests at present, except the Aurannes and the Comtesse de Bielle, who was a friend of Madame Lasserre's in her childhood. There is a constant coming and going of sportsmen, though, and the hospitality of my hosts is proved by the way in which they keep people to luncheon and to dinner.

Jacques d'Auranne and his wife are a good illustration of the possibilities of the "entente cordiale." He is Secretary to the Embassy in Japan, and she is the daughter of Sir James Lionnell, a wealthy manufacturer who has been knighted. They fell in love at first sight at Tokio, at a dinner at the English Embassy. Their marriage quickly followed, not without

opposition from their respective families. Jacques d'Auranne is a cousin of Madame Lasserre's and is also a Burgundian. He is a good specimen of a Frenchman, of medium height with dark complexion, brown hair, black eyes and a young-looking, bold moustache. He has a refined mind with a certain shrewdness and body, like the wine of his country.

Madame d'Auranne is a fine piece of colouring, with her golden blonde hair and her dazzling complexion. Her blue eyes are candid and laughing and her lips fresh and kind. She has the build of a sportswoman and, in her character, that mixture of strength, of gentle persistency, and of timidity which distinguishes her countrywomen.

I always rejoice inwardly when I see the Anglo-Saxon literalness face to face with the Latin elasticity. In marrying a Frenchman, Kate Lionnell did something out of the common, something rather risky, as it were. By a sort of auto-snobbishness, she is proud of it, and that makes her husband of more value in her eyes. He has an extraordinary prestige for her; she adores him and all the more so as she does not thoroughly understand him. She has managed to make herself his comrade. He cannot do without her and, when she is not with him, he is always looking about for her instinctively.

Madame d'Auranne has just been spending a month with her husband's parents who live at the Château de Saint-Cère, in the department of the Côte-d'Or. Thanks to her romantic vein, and above all to her love for her husband, things, which would otherwise have horrified her, seemed delightful and poetical to her. At Mortin, where things are all rather "old French style," she is

most deliciously English. I can divine her astonishment occasionally, and all that amuses me.

The Comtesse de Bielle is the widow of a man who held an important Government post in the Far East. She is tall, rather masculine in her manner and gait, but somewhat feminised by her fair hair just turning grey, her blue eyes and a certain sensitiveness of soul.

She is extremely emancipated and, as she is now obliged to live in France, and in provincial France, she is continually knocking against prejudices and a routine which exasperate her. She herself gets hurt, not the prejudices or the routine, and she then storms in the most amusing way.

Heaven knows what she has done with the fine, naïve, religious beliefs she took away with her. She has certainly left them behind her on the way.

Madame Lasserre, who loves her as though she were her own sister, is visibly grieved about this. She is always trying to rekindle the fire that has gone out. She blows and blows, in a very skilful manner, but, unless I am very much mistaken, not a spark remains.

The homelike atmosphere of Mortin is delightful, and I am waited on with the greatest attention and consideration.

Jenny, "the *Savoyarde*," looks after me. I like to see her, with her hair in *bandeaux*, her well made dress of grey alpaca, and her large white apron. The humour in her bright, dark eyes gives a sort of refinement to her peasant face.

Fortunately, she likes me. From the very way in which she arranges my breakfast near the fire, I can see that she is paying me special attention and I am grateful to her for it.

There is always a pleasant programme every day, and it is not too full.

In the morning, Maïa goes out for a ride with the Aurannes and Comtesse de Bielle. The men are, of course, out shooting all morning. My hostess attends to her household affairs and to her flowers. Her hot-houses are full of wonderful plants.

I work peacefully until about half past ten. Luncheon is at eleven and, in the afternoon, we go for excursions about the surrounding countryside. At half past four we all gather round the tea-table, which is lighted up by the beautiful wood fire. After this we play bridge, and dinner takes place at eight o'clock. In the evening we talk, play cards and billiards. We rarely sit up later than about eleven o'clock. The ceremony of lighting the candles no longer exists, as there is plenty of electric light everywhere. I am sorry to see that old custom disappear. It was always the time for good stories.

Maïa has not forgotten any of my tastes and fancies. She had told her mother that I like to explore places alone when I want to really know them. I was therefore left free to visit Mortin.

I went into the wood where "there is as little killing and cutting down as possible." It is wonderfully "weird," as Madame d'Auranne says. Its narrow paths make it seem impenetrable. There is a mingling of dark branches and delightful grey-blue backgrounds, then that strong odour of earth, that odour of humus which makes the nostrils dilate instinctively. The wood seems to be asleep and the mystery of that sleep affects me and gives me a feeling of holy awe. At times, I have the sensation of being touched — perhaps by the invisible. I am glad when the shrill cry of a bird breaks

the oppressive silence and I am glad, too, to see black-birds, robins and chaffinches. The woods and forests are the sanctuaries that Nature builds in honour of the Eternal God and, in these sanctuaries, the rites are the Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. To-day, the Winter rite seemed to me to be the most beautiful and solemn of all. It is something, I fancy, to have understood that.

On returning to the château, I discovered the chapel. It is built in a sort of glade at the far end of the park. The architect must have had a happy inspiration from the natural dome which shelters it, the archways and vaulted roofs of the forest. He gave it the elegant lines of the French Gothic style. I opened the door and, with a quiet, respectful tread, I walked in.

The beautiful stained glass gave it a restful, dim light. All around the high altar and in the two chapels, dedicated to the Virgin and to St. Francis d'Assisi, there were magnificent plants and on the altars rare flowers. On the walls, I saw pictures by the early Italian masters, and in the niches very old wooden statues. After the religious emotion I had just felt outside under the bare trees, the religious emotion created by symbols seemed to me strangely artificial. It was like a precious stone from a human crucible.

At luncheon I congratulated my hostess on her St. Francis-of-the-Woods. Her face beamed with pleasure.

"There is a very pretty sort of devotion about it," I unwisely added.

"Is there not about all places of worship?" she asked, raising her eyebrows.

The doctor glanced at me as though asking how I was going to parry that question.

"There is something touching about them all," I replied tranquilly, "but they are more or less intelligent and very characteristic. At Ouchy, for instance," I continued, "there is a little chapel, built on a hill by Princess S——, a Russian *grande dame*, who was converted to Catholicism half a century ago. She has become a Mother of the Church. She has lived some of her life in Paris. Her chapel is not Roman, it is Greek, and absolutely Greek. One can feel the foreign soul in it. An English lady asked me very innocently, 'Are you going to church to the Princess's or to Miss Young's?' Miss Young is an English woman who built the chapel of the Catholic hospital of Bois-Cerf. Everyone laughed at her speech, but it was quite natural. I saw you, Madame Lasserre, in your St.-Francis-of-the-Woods — and it is quite French."

"And Roman Catholic, I hope?"

"Oh, quite, there is nothing schismatic about it. You can be easy on that score. I admired the decorations very much. I remember attending a Harvest Thanksgiving service in England. The Church was decorated with wild flowers, fruit and sheaves of wheat. It was very beautiful. I imagine that in the Churches of the future there will be more of Heaven and of Nature."

"Oh, our descendants will not build any more Churches. They will only build temples — temples of science and the altars will be tables for vivisection."

"Isabelle, you are getting sarcastic," said M. Lasserre, laughing.

"And then," put in the doctor, "there will come a day when the tables for vivisection will be put with the instruments of torture which were formerly used for religion and justice. The collection will then be com-

plete, and the barbarous ages will have had their day."

His smile softened the biting sarcasm of his remark.

"*A propos* of religion," said Madame de Bielle, "something very curious a day or two ago. You know I have a Buddha in my dining-room."

"An ugly enough fellow, too," remarked our host.

"Oh no," said Madame de Bielle. "Well, he was in a niche behind the place where the stove is. The other day when I was in the little drawing-room adjoining, I heard a frightful noise and rushed into the dining-room. There was no Buddha, he had disappeared completely, the niche was empty. For a second I felt as though a miracle had taken place. Was it not odd?"

"It would have been more odd if you had not felt that," said Madame Lasserre.

"The shelf had given way and fallen down with him on it. The real miracle is that he was whole when I found him."

"You are a trifle superstitious, though, Claire," said Maïa, smiling. "One evening, I saw you burning some little incense sticks in front of the Buddha in your drawing-room, and he is a very distinguished-looking Buddha. You hoped he would help you to win at bridge."

"Yes, and I lost all the time," said Madame de Bielle, colouring.

"That will not stop you trying again," put in the doctor. "Nothing discourages superstition."

After luncheon, Maïa put her arm through mine and drew me aside.

"Ah, Pierre de Coulevain," she said in a low voice, "you were flattering my poor mother!"

"Not at all," I said. "I really liked her chapel, so

why should I not tell her so? One should never refuse to give credit where it is due."

"Father objected to St. Anthony of Padua and to the Sacred Heart. He declared that the first was too barbarous and the second too mystic. Mother certainly has not a convenient family."

"Fortunately pious persons need not be pitied. They can always get infinite joy out of their very trials. The belief that creates their torment also consoles them. I admire the phenomenon and am glad to be able to admire it."

"And I admire your eclecticism."

"Eclecticism is the very beginning of justice."

"It is the very end rather than the beginning and I am far enough away from that."

"Well, try and get there," I said, "and as quickly as possible."

If I had not seen Maïa at Mortin, I should never have known her thoroughly and she is worth knowing thoroughly. She had always come to me with her mind at strife, more or less worked up by the apparent injustices of life. Our conversations and discussions have helped to bring out her intelligence, some of the good qualities of her heart and mind, the bigger side of her, in fact. I had felt her individuality and her force of character. Here I can realise all her sweetness and she seems to me charming. When I see her so delightful and so kind, I am very angry with Pierre de Couzan. When I see Pierre de Couzan again, I shall probably be furious with her. She is too active and impulsive to seem like the *grande dame* that her mother is, but there is an innate distinction about her that will never leave her. There is not merely a generation between Madame Lasserre and her daughter, but a whole epoch.

Maïa belongs to the tailor-costume era. Oh, the costume is not only what dressmakers and society women imagine it to be.

I quickly saw that the young châtelaine was very much beloved by all the people round. There is a friendliness about the greeting she receives. To my great surprise she fondles the village babies and strokes the hair of the little children who come to speak to her. They all know her, and even the cats and dogs are acquainted with her.

The day before yesterday, we walked up to the little village together. The surrounding country is very beautiful, with a kind of vast, calm beauty. Accustomed as I now am to mountains and to high peaks, it had taken me a little time to get used to the plain and to space. The grey sky, the bluish distance, the dark branches of the trees, the brown, freshly dug earth, the peasants dressed in the same colours bending over the furrows, all made a perfect harmony in a minor key. I stopped a minute in order to enjoy it all the better.

"Ah, you should just see this same place in the Spring," said Maïa, "when the apple-trees are all white with blossom and when the iris is in flower on the roofs and on the walls."

"I could not admire it more than I do this," I said. "We are not fair to the gods of Nature," I added. "They have created a wonderful picture of the end of Autumn for us. Why should we compare this with Spring, which must necessarily be more brilliant?"

"Yes, that is true. We are stupid."

"No, but we do not know how to use our faculties. We are still children, that is all."

The road leading to the village has Norman houses all along, with thatched roofs. Here and there are

some newly built, hideous villas. The mayor's house is a masterpiece of bad taste.

"Oh, Maïa," I exclaimed, "why do you not try to prevent having such horrors built?"

"Prevent a rich peasant from transforming himself into a member of the lower middle class, and his wife from giving up her pretty Norman head-dress and wearing a hat that makes her look ugly? Ah, that is impossible! They would imagine that we were trying to hinder them from climbing up, and even that we wanted to make serfs of them again. I will show you a little home that will console you, though. Kate was charmed with it. It is my dressmaker's."

"Do you mean to say you have a dressmaker at E——?"

"Yes, a dressmaker who makes all my blouses. You can imagine the prestige that gives her in all the country round. Notice her hands," added Maïa, opening the gate of a large, sleepy-looking garden, at the end of which was a long, low-roofed house covered with thatch. On entering this, we found ourselves in a large room, lighted by three windows, with very white curtains, and warmed by a stove.

I had an instantaneous impression of comfort and of bright cleanliness. Madame Isole, a woman of about forty-five years of age, was a mixture of a peasant and of the lower middle class. She looked like a pious vil-lager and she greeted us with evident pleasure, but with a certain dignity. I looked at her hands and I was amazed. They were well kept, but they were also clas-sically beautiful. They looked as though they belonged to another body.

Poor misplaced hands! They were made to be kissed and they had probably never been touched by

any lips. Nature has its days of irony and such days are terrible for us human beings.

Whilst Maïa was giving instructions about Madame d'Auranne's blouses, I looked round.

On the roughly plastered, cracked wall was a wide strip of Turkey twill which served as a background for photographs, post cards and fashion plates. Opposite the door, there was a portrait of a rather good-looking man with a branch of box-wood over it. The pendulum of a big clock, which must already have counted very many hours, moved backwards and forwards, as though it were old and tired. The chest of drawers, the long table, the sideboard, the chiffonnier, the six chairs and the solitary arm-chair were certainly not signed by any famous cabinet maker, but, from the pureness of their simple lines and the polish of the walnut wood, any connoisseur would know, beyond a doubt, that they dated from the eighteenth century. Between the two windows, I noticed an arrangement of green leaves which looked strange. I got up and went to examine it more closely. It was a weaver's loom with a vigorous climbing plant growing round it. On one of its uprights a cage was hung and in the cage were two canaries singing at the top of their little voices. I understood the meaning of this. Death had taken the weaver and the silent loom had been transformed into a living altar.

My eyes filled with tears. I looked at the widow and was surprised that a woman of her type should have had such a refined and exquisite inspiration. I wondered how it came to her, and "the other one" answered, "Just as those hands came to her." After all, that is quite possible, and, however it may be, under this thatched roof and in this pretty country

room, I had come across a beautiful page of human life. I read it and was deeply moved by it.

As soon as we were outside, Maïa said:

“Did you notice her hands?”

“I should think I did notice them,” I exclaimed.  
“Why, they positively throw out light around her.”

“Yes, you are right. She was born ‘under the rose,’ as the English say. She is a natural child. Artists have frequented this part of the country a great deal.”

“Ah, that is the explanation. One of them must have transmitted his dream to her.”

“Yes. When she was young, she might have earned ten francs a sitting in Paris as a model. Beautiful hands are very rare. She would not leave her mother, though.”

“How long has she been a widow?”

“About twelve years. Her husband was a weaver. The Louviers manufactories introduced machinery and after that he had no regular work and so took to drink. His wife adored him nevertheless, and, as you saw, she still worships him. There are quantities of looms in this part of the world that are of no further use, but I can assure you that there is not one that has been transformed like Jean Isole’s.”

Maïa stopped short in the middle of the road.

“Do you know, Granny,” she said, very seriously, “I am beginning to believe that the love of husband and wife is the strongest, the most enduring and the blindest of all love.”

“Yes, I think so, too,” I said, secretly delighted that she should have made this discovery.

“Jacques d’Auranne might have the most glaring faults and Kate would not see them.”

"And even if she saw them, she would love him all the same," I said.

"Oh, yes, she is quite capable of that."

"Love outside marriage is mere literature," I went on.

"Oh, indeed. It would not be at all disagreeable to live that kind of literature, though," said Maïa, glancing mischievously at me.

"No," I answered, "the only thing is, that it is nothing but a bubble of the imagination, it has no roots. At these chance hearths, an occasional fire is made and fir-wood is generally used. It catches fire quickly, crackles and has a good scent, but it neither leaves charcoal nor cinders behind it. At the conjugal hearth the logs are of oak or beech."

"Strong, hard wood, you mean."

"Yes. It burns slowly, has a beautiful, regular flame, and 'it lasts,' as housekeepers say. Its ashes are warm for a long time and there are always a few sparks smouldering under them."

"And when the chimney of the conjugal hearth smokes hopelessly, so that the fire cannot be lighted there, what is to be done?"

"You freeze, or if you are straightforward and honest, you move away. If you are not honest you go to someone else's fireplace to get warm. The misfortune reaches its climax then."

We had just arrived at a nice-looking little house.

"Let us go in here," said Maïa; "you will see a living illustration of your theory. An old couple I like very much live here, a veritable Philemon and Baucis!"

The door was opened to us by a peasant woman of about sixty. Her extreme cleanliness gave her quite a well-to-do look. With her little dark eyes and her col-

ouring, which was still bright, her face looked like a ruddy apple with two juniper berries stuck in it and this face brightened at once on seeing the young *châtelaine*.

"Virginie," said Maïa, at once, "I want you to show my friend your beautiful plates and dishes."

"Oh, yes," said the woman, "if you will step in and warm yourselves I will go and fetch François."

In the big, well-lighted kitchen everything shone—the brass, tin and pewter cooking utensils and the walnut furniture. The walls had been freshly plastered and were of a soft yellowish tint. The tiles had a floral design. I was surprised at all this.

"It was my present to them last year," said Maïa. "I had all this done and superintended the repairs myself. I wanted to see a suitable background for that cupboard and dresser."

The master of the house now arrived, followed by his better half. He was a dapper looking little man and was evidently a docile husband, but by no means stupid, if I could judge by his shrewd, grey eyes and sly smile. His clean, white shirt and warm, knitted waistcoat spoke well for his housekeeper.

He approached us with that innate dignity and ease of manner which the true peasant always has with people of rank above him. He took us into the next room, which was probably their dining-room on festive occasions. There was no *bourgeois* pretentiousness to spoil its rustic simplicity. There was a beautiful sideboard, then an oval table covered with oilcloth, six cane chairs and an arm-chair. On a little table in one of the windows, was a beautiful white azalea which looked as though it had come from the Mortin hot-houses. On the chimney-piece was an old clock, and, on each side of it, a vase with "pope's money," a flower dear to

simple souls. Six beautiful, framed prints attracted attention and made one forgive the lithographs which decorated the walls.

François unlocked the sideboard and brought out four dishes, a dozen plates, a cruet and three cups.

"There!" said his wife, "that is what we had from the ancestors; they could not have been folks that broke everything like we see nowadays."

I was surprised to hear the word "ancestors" from this peasant woman's lips. The old Rouen ware would have delighted the heart of a connoisseur. It left me indifferent. I admired it simply because it had the mark of what is really beautiful.

"Do you ever use them?" I asked.

"Only on the anniversary of our wedding day," she answered.

"That makes forty times that we have eaten off them, doesn't it, François?"

Our host, who had disappeared for a minute, had come back with some glasses and a bottle.

"Yes, we are not young," he said. "We have been married forty years last September."

"Ah, Granny, this is Virginie's specialty. You must taste this currant liqueur and tell me what you think of it," said Maïa.

Currant liqueur, at three o'clock in the afternoon! We touched glasses and I tasted the home-made liqueur, which had an exquisite flavour. I congratulated the good woman, who blushed with pleasure.

"And so you have been married forty years," I said, "and I am sure you are still in love with each other."

"Oh, we have a squabble now and again," said the good man, winking at his wife, "but we never go to bed

without a friendly glass together, just a drop of that liqueur."

The faces of the old couple beamed for a moment and both Maïa and I caught the glance they exchanged. I saw my young friend's eyelashes quiver, and I thought to myself, "Poor Autumn moth, with a heart for Spring-time!"

As we went back into the kitchen I noticed an open door to the right and I moved towards it.

"That is our bed-room," said our host, "will you go in and look at it?"

I went in and was greatly touched by all I saw. The bed-room, the human nest! It was very simple and roughly put together, like that of the sparrows. There was a bed with old Jouy linen for curtains and counterpane and an enormous eiderdown. At the side was a crucifix. A holy water vessel with a branch of box-wood was placed above it and there were two photographs of children below it. On a large chest of drawers were two candelabras and a little bouquet of orange blossom under a glass-shade. This was no doubt the young wife's bouquet brought there forty years ago.

"Have you had any children?" I asked my host, not without some emotion.

"Yes, we had two and they died young. They came of a fine race, but the good Lord took them away again and there is no knowing why."

"He knows, though," I said.

"I suppose so, I suppose He does. We have got a nephew on Virginie's side and he is like our son. He is doing his military service now. This is his portrait."

The good man held out a photograph for me to see.

"What a nice-looking fellow!" I said.

"Ah, yes, and he's a good one at work, too, he knows the land well and he is as fond of us as if we were his father and mother."

I left that humble bed-room charmed with everything. It was fragrant with honesty and full of such beautiful symbols. On leaving, I shook hands affectionately with the old couple and told them I hoped they would celebrate their golden wedding.

"Are they not delightful?" asked Maïa, when we were in the road again.

"Indeed they are," I answered warmly. "And you saw how in love they still are. I think there is more poetry in that 'friendly cup' they have been drinking together for forty years than in all the fitful extravagances of the *grande passion*. I do not think we have discovered the source of true poetry yet, of living poetry."

"That may be," answered Maïa.

I fancied that my young friend's soul had been worked enough just then and I changed the subject. After visiting the old village Church and a famous well, we returned down the hill towards the château. When it came in sight, at the end of the long avenue, I could not help expressing my admiration.

"How you must love it!" I said to Maïa.

"Yes, indeed, I do," she answered, with a long, lingering look at it. "I do not feel at home there, though, now as I did when I was a girl. It always seems to me as though I am visiting."

"But with parents like yours —" I began.

"Yes," she said, "there are certain things that one cannot explain."

I could have explained those things to her. The divorced wife had returned to her family rather like

a dethroned queen. She has much less authority and prestige there now. Her position is more false there, perhaps, than anywhere else. At Mortin, I cannot call her Madame Lasserre. The two Madame Lasserres do not seem right. Is it the consciousness of all this, I wonder, which makes her bend her head when she thinks no one is looking at her? The other morning I saw her, from my window, coming towards the house. She was walking slowly, with her hands behind her back and her eyes fixed on the ground, like anyone with painful thoughts. The delightful comradeship noticeable between the Aurannes must make her feel her isolation. She has a habit of clinging to her father's or her uncle's arm that denotes an instinctive need of masculine support. I see, too, that her divorce is, for her parents, a grief that is constantly being revived, a grief that they feel more and more keenly all the time. It is a source of constant uneasiness to them and of humiliation too. I frequently see my host's eyes fixed on his daughter with an expression of anxious tenderness that is infinitely pathetic. When she sees him looking at her like this, she answers with a bright smile, a burst of gaiety or a caress.

The other day the doctor suddenly said to me:

“And so you see Monsieur de Couzan?”

“Yes, he comes rather often to see me.”

“And what is your opinion of him?”

“I have an excellent opinion of him.”

“I have too. How and why it is that those two individuals could not get on together passes my understanding.”

“Yes, they seemed to be very well suited to each other.”

"And they would have had such fine children," said the man of science.

"Nature may repent and make good her mistake," I said, "it would not be the first time."

Maïa's uncle gave me a quick, curious look and, unless I am greatly mistaken, there was a gleam of satisfaction and hope in his eyes.

Madame Lasserre seems to be the most resigned and calm of them all and I am inclined to say, with her daughter, "There is some good in religion." In spite of its beauty, its comfort and its treasures, Mortin sometimes seems to me empty and sad. It requires more happiness to fill a château than a cottage.

#### *Château de Mortin.*

Dinner is always exquisite at Mortin, not only thanks to the *chef*, but thanks to the people and the things gathered together there. The silky cloth, the old silver and the flowers on the large, oval table all harmonise well; there is a bright fire in the huge grate; the butler looks like a President of some Republic; the two footmen in dark blue livery wait perfectly; the women wear pretty, light dresses and the men well cut dinner jackets. All this, with a setting of old wood-work of Louis XV style, makes a charming picture. I sometimes lean back to enjoy it all better. The conversation is always interesting and the other evening it was especially so for me.

M. Lasserre had spent the previous day in Paris and had returned by automobile. Jacques d'Auranne was asking him about the American financial crisis.

"Oh, the blizzard is nearly over," he replied. "It might have been still more disastrous. What a cu-

rious phenomenon the changing of place of money is. For a certain time all goes along regularly and quietly. Then all at once there is a violent shock, a cataclysm and wealth has changed pockets."

"Is it possible to foresee the shocks?" asked Madame de Bielle.

"It is not impossible, but horribly difficult. One has to keep a look out in the four corners of the horizon, to smell what is in the air and to have a good nose for that. You go to sleep and the sky is serene, you wake up and there is a threatening sky and the storm breaks just where you did not expect it. The fluctuations of the Stock Exchanges, as well as the fluctuations of the atmosphere, obey laws that are unknown, but to which we have to submit. In business affairs, as at the theatre, men create the waves and storms, but the movements are regulated by a machinist, by another will. The wave which they have created may fall back and wash them away. If we financiers had only time to think, we should be the greatest believers in the world, for we feel that we are led, urged on or overthrown by invisible and superior forces."

"Well, then, it is a pity you have not time to think," remarked Madame Lasserre with gentle irony.

"When the soldier is in active service," replied her husband, "he does not think of philosophising, he even loses consciousness of his own individuality. After the battle, he is intoxicated by the triumph of the victory, or busy bathing the wounds caused by the defeat."

"I like to hear you talk of all that," I said to my host. "In Paris, I happen to live opposite to one of the great financial hives. The work there fascinates me. It all seems to be done with mathematical method and order. It often entertains me to watch the con-

fabulations of the principals in the rooms on the second floor. I see these well-dressed men walking up and down, smoking huge cigars, stopping in front of each other to discuss, sitting down and then getting up again. It gives me a little shudder to think that the combinations there, elaborated within those four walls, may effect the existence of thousands of individuals for ill or for good — that war even may be the result. . . .”

“ That is quite true,” said M. Lasserre gravely, “ financiers are the makers of destinies on a large scale. The game is keenly interesting, but it wears one out.”

“ I should scarcely have thought that,” I said, looking at the robust figure of the man at whose side I was placed. My host bowed.

“ It cannot be seen yet perhaps, the damage, but I feel it. With that wretched telephone, which keeps you at the end of its wire, there is no more rest possible. One of these days I shall cut all communication straight off and I shall come out to grass literally. I shall go in for rearing animals, and for agriculture. I shall talk cows, pigs and fowls, instead of talking of the rise and fall. It would be more wholesome.”

“ And when they have deafened me,” said Jacques d'Auranne, “ I shall retire to Saint-Cère and cultivate my vines, and Kate will play the rôle of a French lady of the manor in English. It will be very amusing.”

“ Oh, Jacques, how unkind!” said his wife, laughing.

“ You expect to be deafened first?” I said in surprise.

“ Well, that is usually our fate,” he replied. “ I have just been appointed first Secretary and that will probably be my marshal's baton. I shall be offered a post later on which my dignity will make me decline. I

shall give in my resignation and the thing will be done. In France, we do not try to put the 'right man in the right place,' so that more often than not we get the 'wrong man in the right place.'"

M. Lasserre asked about the shooting. It appeared that the sport had been brilliant and a description was given with all the details possible. As usual, when prowess of this kind is being vaunted, I tried not to hear what was being said. The doctor noticed my attitude.

"I would wager that Pierre de Coulevain has a horror of shooting and hunting," he said.

"For a long time it has seemed revolting to me. At present, I can understand how merciful the gun and even the butcher's knife may be. They spare animals old age, and disease. Old age and disease in the woods and thickets would be a hundred times more cruel. No, I think hunting is a necessary evil."

"It is alarming to think how many evils are necessary in this world," said Maïa, with a comic sigh.

"But, my dear friend, if evils were not necessary, they would not exist."

"Of course not," put in Madame de Bielle, ironically. "God did not want to make a Paradise of this earth."

"The reason is that there is one elsewhere," said our hostess promptly.

"I think shooting is very manly," I continued, "but fox-hunting seems odious and ridiculous."

"Ridiculous?" repeated M. Lasserre, raising his bushy eyebrows.

"Yes, absolutely ridiculous," I persisted. "Would it not seem ridiculous if a whole regiment started out to chase a single man?"

"It would seem worse than that."

"Well, then, all these huntsmen and women, the jockeys and dogs in pursuit, with bugle blasts, etc., to chase small animals like the stag or the fox, seem to me grotesque. All disproportion is grotesque to anyone who has a scrap of humour. I had that impression in Fontainebleau forest and in the Roman Campagna — more particularly there. Two years ago, when I was staying at Axenstein, I used to pay daily visits to a stag and its family who lived in a corner of the park —"

"I should have been surprised if you had not," interrupted Maïa, smiling affectionately.

"Well, they were not long in learning to know me and, when they saw me in the distance, they used to come to meet me. The male always wanted the biggest share of bread. He would drive the female and the young ones away, not with his horns, but by biting at them in a gentle, affectionate way. I was never tired of admiring the beauty of their eyes, the dignity of their movements and the delicacy of their legs. One day when their velvety lips touched me I said aloud to them, "Oh, you beautiful creatures! To think that there are imbeciles who put on red coats to go and hunt and kill you!" I heard a burst of laughter behind me and, on turning round, I found myself face to face with a tall, young Englishman, with a pink complexion and mocking eyes. He moved away, his shoulders still shaking from his burst of gaiety. My cap had evidently fitted him and I only hope that my remark will come to his mind frequently when putting on his red coat."

"Should you have imagined that my uncle here present was a vivisectionist?" asked Maïa.

She said this so seriously that Madame d'Auranne

uttered an exclamation of surprise, and my fork stopped half way. I gazed at the incriminated man's face.

"He is no more a vivisectionist than I am," I said, feeling reassured.

"Rather more so, I fancy," remarked the doctor, smiling.

"The very word vivisection makes me shudder as a cat or a rabbit might on understanding the signification. The last few years I have received a number of letters asking me to take the cause of animals in hand. Heaven knows how gladly I would have done so, for the cause of animals is dearer to me than that of humanity."

"Well, you are frank!" remarked my host, looking at me with an indulgent expression in his eyes.

"Yes, I confess my weakness," I said. "The English poet and mystic, Thompson, said that those who were looking for him in the world beyond would find him 'in Heaven's nurseries.' They will certainly find me in the zoological gardens."

"That is a good thing to know," said Maia, laughing.

"I am afraid of my own sensitiveness with regard to animals," I said. "I should be afraid of doing them harm by saying too much, and he who says too much, says nothing at all."

"Well," said the doctor, "shall we talk vivisection without sentimentality?"

"If it is not too cruel," I said imploringly.

"You see, vivisection allows us to study the action of life on life itself and to know the modification that such and such a treatment or such and such a medicine may have. It renders undeniable services to science in that way. It is far from giving the results that were hoped for though, and it will probably never give them. In

the meantime, and I can give proofs of this, it has done and is doing the human species more harm than good and the animals have not been the only victims. It has given birth to what I call ‘carabinage.’ ”

“ Is that a disease? ” asked Madame de Bielle.

“ A disease, yes,” replied the doctor, seriously, “ a sort of madness. Vivisection in itself is scientific, one must acknowledge that, but it is exercised in the most anti-scientific and most barbarous way, and that in the light of the twentieth century. Certain practitioners give their demonstrations whilst torturing animals and prolonging their sufferings as long as they think well. They do this with a merciless and useless superfluity of demonstrations. The sight is revolting and I have never been able to endure it.”

“ I am glad to hear that,” I remarked quietly.

“ They demoralise young men and they blunt the humane feeling within them, and, I can assure you, that this is not by any means too keen. Then they are seized with a spirit of emulation. They wish to be scientific men and not doctors, not physicians, but laboratory men. And with this idea in their minds they begin experimenting. You should hear them say that they practise vivisection. The worst of it is that they do, the wretches. With the most frightful ignorance, they cut living flesh, arteries and veins. When they fancy that they have discovered a fresh ligature they experiment on poor devils in the hospitals and, as the poor devils have not the same anatomy as dogs and rabbits, they die of it. All that is what I call *carabinage*. Thanks to this we now have a whole crowd of imitation savants, who are supposed to be experimenting for the good of humanity. Much they care about humanity! Some of them have discovered a profitable serum, for

there have never been so many people ready to swallow anything they are told as nowadays, but these men have not discovered the serum that will give immunity from disease and that will regenerate. If that exists, it will not be discovered by them. This *carabinage* has given a retrograde movement to medicine, it has turned it out of its natural course. We used to be noted in France for our clinical superiority and for our diagnosis. We are losing all this through not cultivating it. We have adopted the faults of the Germans and not their good qualities."

"We always do that sort of thing," exclaimed M. Lasserre.

"At present," continued the doctor, "in the new school, disease and its symptoms are no longer studied as they were. These are considered negligible quantities and they are consequently neglected. An attempt is made to cut the disease short at once by means of serum and anti-toxines of which we neither know the principles nor the reaction.

"Disease, which is very scientific, resists this treatment, as it is contrary to Nature. The treatment sometimes stops the disease, as though by surprise, but it does not destroy it, and Nature frequently avenges itself in a terrible way by partial paralysis or madness, for the rascal is equal to everything and has plenty of ways of avenging itself.

"The imitation savants never try to find out what becomes of the patients whom they have declared cured, whilst under the temporary influence of some kind of poison. We have given up the old, efficacious and harmless remedies. We have not continued studying the medicinal plants, the juices and sap of which would probably regenerate our blood. The virgin forests of

the world, Nature's great laboratories, probably contain the very antidotes for which we go to the animals. The refuge for stray animals is so much nearer. The patients themselves have been influenced by this *carabinage*, so that now an anæmic or neurasthenic woman, for whom the doctor prescribes fresh air, the country or a quarter of an hour's gymnastic exercise every night and morning, will tell him tranquilly that all that would bore her and that she would rather he injected some of these famous drops of anything he likes. The doctor obeys and I can assure you that plenty of fashionable women like to have their skins marked with these injections. Of course, in many cases, the treatment is necessary, but a veritable trade has been made out of these injections. That is the only claim to glory which this *carabinage* has."

"And does it really bring in much money, this kind of treatment?" asked Maïa seriously.

"Well, half a guinea, a guinea or two guineas for each injection. The amount depends on the practitioner and not on the drug employed. The drug does not really matter. I am beginning to be ashamed of my profession. It used to be considered sacerdotal in olden times, but the word is now ridiculed. The ideal was too high and ridicule was a means of destroying that. In spite of all that can be said to the contrary, the medical profession is sacerdotal. Bad priests have transformed it into a medical industry, and, in this industry, there is as much fraud as in alimentation and the fraud is still more dangerous."

"All this is by no means comforting," remarked Jacques d'Auranne disconsolately.

"The old vow that was formerly in use will have to be restored, together with all the solemnities possible.

The would-be doctor would then have to swear *urbi et orbi* to respect his profession, and to sacrifice his life and 'his personal interest' to the health of the human species."

"And as nothing is sacred now, by what could he swear?" asked Madame Lasserre, with her pretty little aggressive air.

"He could swear on his honour!"

"And if he has not any?"

"Well, we should see that he had not, but perhaps he might cultivate it. We have tried to do away with symbols, with formulas that stimulate the better forces of the soul, forces that create wings for the soul. We thought we could rise without all that, and we have fallen flat down. I should like to see a code of honour in the medical profession still more strict than the one in the army. The man who breaks its laws ought to be degraded publicly, just like an officer who betrays his country. To betray the human species, his own species, why I do not know a greater or more treacherous crime. If we had this reform, those who had no vocation would not approach the Temple."

"The best thing for us to do, considering all this, is to try to keep well," said our host.

"The medical profession is at present undergoing a moral crisis such as all evolutions bring about," continued the doctor, "but it will come out victorious. An enormous number of true doctors, and of capable and conscientious surgeons with the scientific mind, exist in the world. No mention is made of them, as they are busy cultivating their art instead of cultivating the art of self-advertisement. I have the greatest esteem for the district doctors, for, as a rule, they throw themselves into their work without thought of glory or profit.

Among them the most remarkable and disinterested men are to be found. They generally have the most varied experience, great intuition and self-abnegation, and all these are powerful factors. They take disease from the time it first begins and not when it has developed at the hospital. They follow it up patiently and fight it with admirable persistency. They know their patients and the conditions of their existence. They know what the life of the father or mother means to the family, and they do not spare themselves in their efforts to save that life. Nine times out of ten they succeed where their more celebrated colleagues would have failed. In this way they preserve very valuable forces for society and society does not even know it. No student ought to receive his doctor's certificate until he has practised at least two years under a district doctor. Needless to say," added the doctor, ironically, "that no one helps them in their task or tries to make it any lighter for them. They have no influence as far as the Mayor of their district is concerned, unless they happen to be of his political party. Politics, in spite of what that great joker, the dictionary, says, means the science of attending to one's own affairs and not to those of the public."

"I am surprised that you have so little faith in serums and anti-toxines," said Jacques d'Auranne.

"Do we really know what they all are!" replied the doctor, shrugging his shoulders.

"So many failures of science, probably," added Madame Lasserre.

"Alas, yes, science is like certain individuals, it only gets rich by failures. Anyhow, it is not with serums that a species or a race can be regenerated. For that we must have a hygiene that is well attended to, good

alimentation, well regulated activity and physical and moral cleanliness. If only we had used for all that the time and money which we have employed for experiments on animals, we should have a healthy generation that would resist tuberculosis and other things, thanks to its own strength."

"Are we as degenerate as all that?" asked Madame de Bielle pitifully.

"You should go and interview the accoucheurs and the dentists. They will give you the health bulletin of our race. There is, too, no more convincing and heart-rending proof than the pornography that is displayed everywhere. It is a sign of degeneracy and of bad education, and it makes degenerates. There is no getting over that fact."

"But what do you mean by pornography?" asked Madame d'Auranne. "Jacques is the worst French teacher possible. I asked him what the word meant. He told me to look in the dictionary and I cannot find it there."

We all smiled as she said this.

"You could not find it?" repeated the doctor. "I am surprised at that for it must have the right to a place by now. Pornography is a perversion of taste which makes people search for, and like things, that are unpleasant and unclean. This taste is attributed to the animal that you call pig and that we call *porc*. Hence the word pornograph. It is a calumny, as this taste belongs exclusively, and this I say without any calumny, to the man who is a degenerate or who has been badly brought up."

"Ah, I see," said Madame d'Auranne with a faint blush, which proved to us that she understood quite enough.

"*A propos,*" I said, "I must tell you something that might serve for the 'history of our times.' It appears that on leaving Paris, the sovereigns, princes and grandes who come here usually take home a stock of pornographic literature."

"Oh, yes, we supply the whole world, and there is nothing to be proud of in that," remarked M. Lasserre.

"At the shop where I buy my paper they have had the leaves of these edifying books to cut several times. The proprietor was curious to see what books these grand people read and he said to me naïvely. 'It is astounding that people of that kind should have tastes that are not at all *chic*.' That is really word for word what he said."

"They are degenerates!" said the doctor. "When people are in good health they do not need drugs. This justifies the theory that Dr. V. Galippe develops in his remarkable book: *Heredity of the Blemishes of Degeneracy*. Read that and you will be enlightened."

"I was delighted," said Jacques d'Auranne, "on returning to France, to see that out-door sports had taken their places at last in the life and education of young people with us." Dr. Henri shrugged his shoulders.

"Among the rich, yes," he said, "but the people, the middle class and the provinces know nothing of out-door sports, and it is just there where they are most necessary. A dentist told me that he could always distinguish young people who go in for sports by their power of endurance. People of the lower middle class spare themselves no sacrifice in order to let their children have instruction, but they would not spend a copper to let them get muscles. At the age of fifteen or sixteen our young collegians talk women instead of

talking cricket, golf or tennis, and they talk in a precocious, unwholesome way. At my place at L—— I am trying experiments on my youngsters with physical and moral sports."

"Moral sports!" repeated Madame de Bielle, opening her eyes wide with a droll expression.

"Yes, it is possible to train the human soul in a wholesome way just as one trains the body to exercise its forces. I have obtained wonderful results. I am going in for psychical vivisection."

"If only you would never go in for any other kind!" I exclaimed.

"Pierre de Coulevain," said Maïa, "does not the fate of animals here below rather disturb your optimism?"

"Much less now than formerly," I said. "After a great deal of reflection, I have come to the conclusion that animals have been taking part with us in our earthly struggles and I imagine that, as they have had the hardships, they will have honour too. I trust that, as with us, all things will be taken into account."

"That is quite reasonable," said the doctor, with a look of friendly approval.

"Oh," said Madame Lasserre, "you are going too far!"

"Not when it is a question of divine justice," I replied, calmly, and then, turning to the doctor, I asked him whether he approved the movement of protection and compassion so evident just now in favour of the animals.

"I should rather think so!" he replied. "You have no idea how necessary it is."

"And would you like vivisection to be abolished?" asked Jacques d'Auranne.

"No," answered the doctor, decidedly. "It is still necessary, like so many painful and cruel things. Are we not all of us constantly undergoing vivisection ourselves at the hands of Nature? Believe me, vivisection can be exercised humanely. It ought only to be practised in laboratory work, and it certainly ought to be done away with in the lecture room. In the interests of man, as well as of animals, it ought not to figure in the earlier stages of medical education. The sacred right of experimenting on life ought not to be entrusted to anyone. In my opinion there are only some half dozen savants in the whole scientific world who should be entrusted with this charge. The legislators of all civilised nations ought to come to some understanding and edict laws for the prevention of the present increase of cruelty, for cruelty, too, is a sign of degeneracy."

"Do you think that the anti-vivisection campaign may produce any good effect?" I asked anxiously.

"Yes," answered the doctor, "provided the women do not go in for sentimentality and the men for politics —"

"Ah, if the women are not to go in for sentimentality nor the men for politics. . . . Poor animals!"

#### *Château de Mortin.*

The day before yesterday, towards three in the afternoon, I was lying down on my beautiful Louis XV couch, reading. A bright fire made the room look gay and on the chimney-piece, just above the blaze, were two beautiful vases full of roses. From time to time I glanced at the glowing fire, my book slipped from my hands and I remained for a time in a sort of happy stupor.

M. Lasserre and the Aurannes had gone to Paris; my hostess and the Comtesse de Bielle were paying visits and something of the peace of Mortin had come upon me. Presently I heard a knock at my door and, on calling out "Come in," Maïa's face appeared in the doorway.

"May the uncle, the niece and the dog call on you?" she asked.

"I should think so," I replied, getting up as briskly as possible.

"Are you sure that we shall not disturb you?" asked Dr. Henri.

"Quite sure, this is my playtime," I answered.

The uncle sat down in the arm-chair opposite mine to which I invited him. He was in full daylight and a fine face is always a treat for me to behold. The variable expression of his face interests me immensely. Maïa pulled up a big footstool which is her favourite seat and, sitting down, clasped her hands round her knees, which is also one of her favourite attitudes. Pick came up to me very prettily and, when I had stroked him, lay down on his side near the fire.

"Cigarettes are allowed," I said.

The doctor bowed and, taking his cigarette-case out of his pocket, offered me one.

"You do not offer me one!" said Maïa, putting on an injured look. "And I am supposed to be very much indulged."

"Do you not allow this young person cigarettes?" I asked.

"I give her one when she has beaten me at billiards, and when she has been extremely good. When a woman has the wholesome fragrance of youth, she should not

spoil it by anything, either by smoking or by artificial perfumes. When my niece is thirty-four or thirty-five, I shall make her a present of a smoking outfit, but, no matter how beautiful it may be, I know she will not be satisfied with it."

" You see," she said, turning to me, " how my family manages to disgust me with quite nice things."

" Ah, while I think of it," I said, irrelevantly, " will you tell me how your mother came to give you that beautiful pagan name of Maïa? "

" Well, you see," she replied, laughing, " I had this miscreant here for a godfather." She put her hand on her uncle's knee as she spoke. " But for him I should be simply Anne-Marie. He insisted on my being baptised Maïa, Anne-Marie."

" Was not Maïa the mother of Mercury?" I asked.

" In Grecian mythology, yes," answered Dr. Henri. " In Hindu mythology it is the personification of the feminine principle."

" I am sure my poor mother has many a time attributed my shortcomings to my name," said Maïa.

" Well, it certainly is rather suggestive of heresy. Anne-Marie would have been more orthodox."

As I said this I took the tongs up in order to arrange the fire. The corner of my handkerchief came out of my sleeve. Maïa saw it and pulling it quickly out showed me a yellow thread hanging from the corner.

" Granny, Granny," she said, " the laundry threads still in your handkerchief. If Sherlock Holmes saw that, he would guess at once that you are a rambler and that you live in hotels. Where are your handkerchiefs? I must take these horrors out."

"In my chest of drawers," I said, "in the middle drawer." Maïa sprang up alertly and went into my bedroom.

"A funny girl is she not?" said her uncle, watching her with an affectionate expression in his eyes. "At times she might be fifty and then all at once ten years old."

"And very charming at all times!" I said.

"Yes, she is," he acknowledged, sighing involuntarily. When Maïa returned with the handkerchiefs, she went to my writing table for the scissors and caught sight of the book I had left on the sofa.

"What were you reading?" she said, opening it. "The Bible!" she continued, "and would you believe it, Uncle Henri is reading it, too. You really are amazing, you two people!" she said, sitting down again on her footstool.

"But the Bible, like the Vedas and like the books of Hermes Trismegistus, is one of humanity's treasures!" said Dr. Henri warmly. "The more I read it, the more astounded I am at all the philosophy and all the science it contains."

"Science!" repeated his niece. "You call Genesis scientific!"

"Genesis was no doubt written in hieroglyphics, with the writing that hides scientifically as well as graphically. The hieroglyphics are full of gleams of light. One feels that Moses *knew*, but that he was talking to people who did not know. He *knew* when he wrote: 'And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.' Human language has not a more beautiful image than that and there is a truth contained in the image. He

*knew* too, when he said: ‘So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.’”

“And in the following chapter,” said Maïa, “as though Moses has forgotten what went before, he tells that God took a rib from Adam’s side and made the woman.”

“Well, that was a way of dualising him,” I said, smiling. Maïa looked at me in amazement.

“You are right, perhaps,” she said, “I had never thought of that. At any rate,” she continued, as though to make up for this admission, “he was not scientific when he put the creation of the earth on the third day and that of the stars, the sun and the moon on the fourth. For a priest of Osiris, ‘brought up in all the science of Egypt,’ that was certainly not very brilliant.” Maïa pulled a refractory thread very hard as she said this.

“You little goose,” began Dr. Henri, leaning forward.

“Uncle!”

“Yes, little goose,” he repeated. “Moses was scientific for the times in which he lived. Every discovery is a stroke of the oars which sends the ship of humanity onward, and the proper time for such strokes is arranged. Galileo had not then given his stroke.”

“All that would be very well if theologians did not tell us that Moses was inspired by God.”

“He was, though, my child,” I said, “since God was carrying out, by means of him, the plan of His work here below, just as He does now by means of us.”

“And after all,” continued the doctor, “our planet was millions and millions of years without knowing of the existence of the sun.”

"Without knowing of the existence of the sun!" exclaimed Maïa.

"Certainly. During the entire epoch of its great conceptions, of the bringing forth of the mountains, for instance, it lived by its own heat. The evaporation of its waters created clouds around it and the density of those clouds isolated it from the rest of the Universe. Under the action of its cooling, the clouds gradually lifted, the cryptogams and the reptiles appeared. It then began to feel the radio-activity of its 'great light,' of its future master, and it had a morning and a night. You must know all this as well as I do, so you see the Book of Genesis does not disagree so much with science."

"Yes, we know, we know, but it is all so vague," said Maïa, giving up her work on my handkerchiefs for a time, and clasping her hands again around her knees.

"In order to understand Genesis," continued her uncle, "you must remember what the mission of Moses really was. The knowledge of the one God existed in the great Aryan and Egyptian sanctuaries and perhaps in the heart of man. Politics, the ambition of the priests (as the more gods there were, the more did the priesthood get) and the lower instincts held this belief in bondage, so that it remained a dead letter. Moses was to make it living and so prepare the way for Christianity. He chose the Israelites for his tabernacle. This nation was monotheistic by tradition, but polytheistic by preference. The thing was to make the one God visible and beloved. To this child-like people, to these lovers of stories and of the marvellous, an all-powerful God was necessarily a God who was a magician. This was why Moses wrote: 'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.' "

"Ah, I understand," said Maïa, nodding.

"We always like those who resemble us, or whom we resemble. With an admirable knowledge of human nature, the legislator wrote: And God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let him have dominion over the fowl of the air and over the cattle.' This last word was a stroke of genius; it gave me the key to Genesis. The idea of dominion over the cattle could not fail to touch a nation of shepherds. Then too, it was always the women who led the Israelites away to the worship of false gods. Moses wanted to inspire them with fear and distrust of woman and, at the same time, give to them a plausible cause for the ills of humanity. He did this very cleverly with that adorable story of the earthly Paradise, the elements of which already existed in very far back traditions."

"Adorable!" exclaimed Maïa, turning her indignant face to the doctor. "So you think the story adorable that makes woman the scapegoat for all the sins of the world!"

"The scapegoat!" I said, laughing.

"Yes," she answered, "a legend of that kind could only have been invented by a man. And it certainly has been repeated often enough."

"Yes, and if we consider all the sentiments, deeds, and ideas, the good and the harm, and the masterpieces it has inspired, we must admit that it was destined to be a factor in the life of our planet. It probably has a deep esoteric sense also. Eve is the Eternal feminine, from whom we have the Virgin and the Mother. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the conscience. The serpent is the symbol of the cycle that had to be lived."

"The one thing that has always consoled me is the pitiful rôle of Adam in the affair," said Maïa.

"Man always seems to have a more or less pitiful rôle when he yields to a woman's tempting," replied the doctor, making a pretty cloud of smoke. "With it all, Moses not only implanted monotheism in the heart of his people, but he created a personal God for them. Jehovah became the God of the Israelites, just as Jesus Christ became, later on, the God of the Christians. Moses, and the prophets after him, made Him talk constantly, sometimes in a sublime way, but always in a human way. The Old Testament is a dialogue between the Creator, such as man could imagine, and the creature."

"Ah, that is the secret of its mysterious charm!" I exclaimed. "I had never quite understood what it was."

"Yes, in this dialogue of unequalled beauty, man gives vent to his woe and to his revolt. He blasphemers, he asks the four winds of heaven the why and wherefore of things. Jehovah corrects him, threatens him, punishes him and then soothes him, consoles him often with fatherly kindness and, all the time, gives him fresh hopes."

"That is what makes the Bible so living," I said, "for it really does speak to us. Maïa," I continued, handing her the holy book, "open it anywhere, but with some idea in your mind."

She obeyed and read aloud the passage that attracted her attention: "Thus saith the Eternal, if we fall, shall we not get up again, if we turn away, shall we not come back? How odd!" she said in a low voice with some emotion.

Her uncle and I glanced at each other.

"If we read a chapter of Ezekiel and then a chapter of the Gospel of St. John," continued the doctor, "it is as though we have first taken a fiery liqueur and then one of honey. One has the impression, too, of the progress of humanity. In the Old Testament there is a warlike breeze. It is the Iliad. In the Gospel there is a gentleness that seems to penetrate us in all the scenes, images and miracles. It is more like the Odyssey."

"Really, then," said Maïa, "Moses was the forerunner of Christ?"

"Certainly, and, so that the chain should not be broken, St. Matthew shows us Jesus, Moses and Elijah in all the splendours of the Transfiguration," answered the doctor.

"I am quite amazed at you, Uncle," said his niece, "you could compete with a clergyman."

"Yes, but I doubt whether a clergyman and I would read the Bible in the same spirit."

I got up, and going to my writing-table drawer, I took out a small grey-covered book and then, picking up the Bible, I held the backs of them up to my visitors. The first was very thin and poorly bound, the second voluminous and important looking.

"The Law and the Prophets," I said, smiling; "the Bible — and the Catechism of the Diocese of Paris. This book produced that one."

"Do you mean to say that you own a Catechism, Granny?" exclaimed Maïa.

"Yes, as you see," I answered. "And to think," I continued, "that between the covers of these two books there are invisible psychical forces, that have moved armies, destroyed and created empires. Is it not wonderful?"

"All the same, I should never have imagined that there would be a Catechism in your trunk!" observed Maïa.

"I had a fancy to read it again," I said, sitting down again in front of the fire, "after fifty years, half a century. . . ."

"Ah, I should like to know what effect it produced on you, do tell us that," begged Dr. Henri, with an expression of intense curiosity.

"Well, I had always remembered it as something very complex and very obscure and, above all, as something that had caused me a hundred disagreeable things, something that I had detested," I said. "No child can like the Catechism or understand it. I read it again without any great affection for it, as you can imagine. I was struck, though, with the simplicity of its lines, with the logic of its dogmas, with its philosophical synthesis, and it seemed to me almost mathematical in its rigidity. I could not find a trace of what Protestants and other people call superstition. I am glad to be able to make this statement, as I have a horror of all injustice. Unfair and ignorant people call what they do not understand 'superstition.'"

"Oh, yes," said Maïa, "but at the same time weak-minded people, excitable and sentimental women have added a whole crowd of ridiculous practices to Catholicism. The Church tolerates such things, because it brings in money, but all that lowers it."

"Less than politics," put in her uncle, severely.

"Would you believe, Doctor," I said, "that, on reading over again certain chapters, I felt just as bored as I had done fifty years previously. I also discovered that I still knew my Catechism by heart. Take the book," I added, "and question me."

Dr. Henri took the book from me, opened it and asked me—:

“ What is the meaning of these words, ‘ From whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead? ’ ”

“ Ah,” said Maïa in a low voice, “ there will still be people living! ”

“ These words mean,” I answered, “ that at the end of the world Jesus Christ will be seen to come in great majesty to judge all men and to give to each one according to his works.”

“ A good mark,” said Dr. Henri, smiling. “ The curious part is that you answer with the intonation of a school-child.”

“ Like the parrot I was, probably. Ah, what an admirable motor we have within us! ” I said.

“ Admirable! In spite of what certain savants say.”

“ And do you know that in reading the Catechism again, I understood and approved the unyielding attitude of Pius X.”

“ Oh, Granny,” exclaimed Maïa, “ is that possible? ”

“ Yes, quite. I had the impression that he could not have changed anything in these dogmas. They are so clear, so mathematical and above all so closely linked together. Out of pure spiritual aestheticism, I should not like to see them mutilated. Most of them will disappear by the sheer force of things, but they must disappear altogether. They cannot be adapted to our modern mentality. Modern mentality cannot accept them, so that those who believe must enter into the temple and those who do not believe must stay outside. It is so simple! ”

“ You do not think it is possible for there to be an agreement between dogma and science? ” asked the doctor.

"No, for the simple reason that dogma must be immutable, whilst science, which studies Divine work, is necessarily progressive. It gropes along, it is always searching things out, it makes mistakes, but it goes on all the time, just as the Universe does, and it goes along with the Universe. Dogma is a bond, an impediment. There is a certain fish which draws from its own body a sort of fibrous substance, by means of which it fastens itself to a rock, to which it remains fastened for a given period. Nature has its reasons, no doubt, for restricting its movements. In the same way, the Catholic Church has elaborated, and drawn from its own soul, the dogmas which fasten it and its followers to its spiritual rock and hold them captive."

"But these dogmas are only symbols after all," said Dr. Henri.

"Yes, but humanity in its childhood would not have understood symbols. The strict letter of dogma was necessary; its positive hopes and consolations were necessary. There are still millions of creatures who need all this. In any case it is not for the laity to point out to the Pope the evolution that should take place, in the same way as one points out to a dramatic author the scene that there is to write in his play. The evolution of Catholicism began a long time ago, and it is going on unknown to those who are the most opposed to it, and even by means of them. Providence has a habit of employing ironies of this kind. One scarcely ever hears the words now, which I heard constantly when I was young: 'There is no salvation outside the Catholic Church.' Certain dogmas are now touched on very lightly, that of the last judgment, for instance, and that which condemns children who die unbaptized to the regions of limbo. When penitent women worry their

confessors with their doubts, if the latter are intelligent they do not pursue the subject. I have found a still more flagrant proof of this evolution. You would never guess where. In the abridged version of the Sacred History which serves as a preface to the Catechism of the Diocese of Paris."

"What is the proof?" asked Maïa, impetuously.

"The creation of the earth is given as having taken place the *sixth* day. You understand, *after* the creation of the 'great light' and in Genesis it is given as the work of the *third* day."

"Oh, I must see that. It is too good!" exclaimed Maïa. In her hurry she forgot my poor handkerchiefs, and, in getting up, they were scattered over Pick and the carpet. She gathered them up quickly and went across to the little table, on which her uncle had put the Catechism. She opened the book, and, after finding the place, began to read.

"You are right, Granny," she said. "The earth comes on the sixth day. Oh, shades of Galileo! While they were about it, they might as well have put the creation of the stars before that of the sun."

"Show me that Catechism," said Dr. Henri, as though he could scarcely believe his ears. An expression of pleasure, of delicate irony, lighted up his face on reading the Biblical phrase again.

"Well, it seems to me that great liberties have been taken with the Book of Genesis," he remarked.

"Yes," I agreed, "but the pupil of to-day, at any rate, cannot be surprised to see the earth appearing before the sun. As he does not read the Bible it does not matter."

"They might have put as a footnote, 'according to the discoveries of Science,'" remarked Maïa, "that

would have been more straightforward, as this is cheating. Ah, I shall show Mother this evolution!"

"Leave your mother in peace, I beg," said the Doctor, seriously. "With a daughter like you she must need all her religious faith."

"Thank you," answered Maia, sitting down again on her footstool.

"Two years ago," I said, "when I was at Axenstein, just above the Lake of the Four-Cantons, I had the most charming surprise. The day after my arrival there, I was exploring the park round the Grand Hotel and I came across a small glacier."

"A glacier in a park!" exclaimed Dr. Henri. "You would have to go to Switzerland to find such a thing as that!"

"Yes, indeed. It stood out quite by itself and looked like some geological specimen. There was an enormous block of granite opposite, on which someone had written in German:

Ihr Herren der Theologie,  
wann?

Ihr Herren der Geologie,  
wie?

Wenn Menschen schweigen  
Werden Steine reden.\*

"Well!" I exclaimed, aloud, sitting down on a bench placed just near for those who wanted to meditate. And I can assure you that those beautiful, slate grey

\* Ye Lords of Theology,  
when?

Ye Lords of Geology,  
how?

If men keep silence  
Stones will speak!

stones did speak. They said that it had taken millions and millions of years for the water, that fluid, silky thing, to polish them and to hollow them out like so many organ pipes. Whilst I was listening to these startling revelations, in this Sabbath peace and tranquillity, the sound of church and convent bells was wafted to me from Schwyz, the most Catholic of all the German-Swiss towns. The sound was only faint and intermittent, but it brought me a curious sensation of peace."

"I will go to Axenstein," declared Maïa.

"On my way back to the hotel, I passed through a wood of beech trees and there, not only the stones spoke, but the roots of the trees. The stones told of a period still further back, of many more transformations. They must have known the ardours of the fiery whirlpool, the dying away of the glacial period, the violence of unbridled torrents. They now know all the gentleness of vegetable life. Nature's agents have made them fruitful. Roots have germinated in their cracks and crevices. These roots were most extraordinary, they were absolutely *Dantesque*. They had climbed up bare rocks and were clinging to them, propping themselves up by them. Their efforts to extract nourishment had twisted and tortured them. They had an expression of human suffering."

"And thanks to their painful efforts," added the doctor, smiling, "we now have, I suppose, tall, straight trees with light foliage?"

"Yes, that is just it. I could not help patting some of those roots and saying to them, 'Ah, how brave you have been!' That wood, where so many mysteries and transformations had taken place, made a great impression on me. It was quite weird, for, although it was very lonely, it seemed to me to be peopled. As I was

crossing a kind of green circus, most delightfully shaded by the trees, which had probably been a yawning gulf formerly, I heard the sound of a hymn from a little Anglican Church built near. I stopped short, thinking of the millions of centuries it had taken for a human prayer to be offered up from these heights. Yes, the stones certainly spoke to me."

"Yes, but the Swiss philosopher who wrote the words 'Stones will speak' at Axenstein ought to have added, 'When will men hear their language?' They are all brawling still, like so many blind people, round the door of the earthly Paradise. The worst of it is that with most of them it is a matter of atavism and not of conviction at all."

"The question of religion is so complicated and so complex," said Maia. "You surely cannot apply your favourite remark, 'It is all so simple,' to that, Granny?"

"On the contrary," I replied, "it seems to me that the whole question is contained in a mere nut-shell. The origin of man, according to the Book of Genesis, is the basis of Judaism and of Christianity. If people believe it they can be Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Lutherans, Calvinists, Dissenters or even Christian Scientists."

"And if they do not believe it?"

"Then they must just simply be Christians, disciples of Him who said, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,' because that way, that truth and that life were the ideal of love and of justice, towards which humanity must steer and which is perhaps the final word. The one thing we have to do," I added, "is to open our windows on the Universe and look at the army of the Heavens and the army of the Earth and adore Him who governs them."

"Millions of creatures will die, though, without ever

looking out of the window," remarked Dr. Henri, throwing away the end of his cigarette.

"I came very near being one of them myself," I said.

"But, Granny," put in Maïa, "I know very many fervent Catholics who look upon the story of Adam and Eve as a mere legend."

"And I know many Protestants of the same way of thinking," I said. "They are neither logical, honest nor orthodox, that is all I have to say. If the original sin was not committed, humanity neither needed a Redeemer nor redemption. The divinity of Christ then is done away with. He was a mere reformer, one of those destined to take the oars in hand and give some good strokes. The legend of the garden of Eden is carved in the wood of the pulpit of the St. Gudule Church at Brussels, and it is a beautiful symbol that the words of the Catholic priest should be spoken from there. Liberties cannot be taken with fundamental dogmas. They must either be accepted in their integrity or rejected altogether, so that I repeat: 'It is all so simple'!"

"Can you explain what this Christian Science is, which you mentioned just now?" asked Maïa.

"It is a religion that was founded by a woman, the only one, I fancy, that has been founded by a woman."

"And what do people believe in this religion?"

"Ah, that is not so simple. They believe in the existence of an atmosphere created by the spirit of God and spread through the Universe. This special atmosphere was discovered by a certain Mrs. Eddy. It appears that she discovered the revelation of it in the Gospel."

"She is American, is she not?"

“ Yes.”

“ Americans are astonishing ! ”

“ This atmosphere of Divine love can and should cure all diseases without the help of medicine and doctors.”

“ Ah, a bad look-out for us ! ” remarked Dr. Henri.

“ It makes the body sound and healthy, it gives joy to the soul, it takes away all worries and sorrows and, through it, you may often obtain the fulfilment of your wishes.”

“ How can one procure this magic fluid, though ? ” asked Maïa.

“ Mrs. Eddy teaches that in a book entitled *Science and Health*. The means she admits are, faith, prayer, the reading of certain passages of the Gospel and concentration of will-power. Some persons, who I suppose are really mediums, are more sensitive and can attract this fluid, store it up and use it as a therapeutic agent. These are the healers, the priests and priestesses of the temple.”

“ Have they ever healed anyone ? ” asked Dr. Henri.

“ Oh, yes. They have accomplished *natural* miracles, like those of Lourdes. A number of Christian Scientists, in cases of tuberculosis and peritonitis, have allowed members of their family to die and have died themselves rather than have recourse to ordinary therapeutics. I fancy there is no preaching in this religion. Criticism, arguments and controversy are all strictly forbidden. Its adepts must only allow themselves to receive impressions.”

“ And you mean to say that a woman gave that law ? ” asked Dr. Henri, leaning forward in his arm-chair.

“ Yes.”

“ Well, I think she was a wise person.”

“ And you may add a genius. Up to that time, all

founders of religions promised their believers celestial happiness. Mrs. Eddy promised her followers earthly happiness. There is nothing wonderful, therefore, in the fact that Christian Science, which was only founded in 1879, should now have a million followers and over 600 churches. It has a church in Boston which cost ten million francs, and it has given its founder an immense fortune."

"It is most extraordinary," said Maïa, "and does this American Popess still live?"

"She has died lately. She was very old. Her collaborators, her Cardinals, we might say, took her from her Concord Palace, near Boston, to a villa full of flowers, an ideal place, it appears. From there, she used to send out her messages, which were read in the Churches like those of Pius X. She had a son. I wonder whether he will take his mother's mantle. I fancy he will make sure of her money bags."

"How strange that such things should take place in our times and, above all, in America!"

"There is more religious sentiment and spirituality in the United States than in Europe. I will give you an instance which will show you how a religious bluff of this kind succeeds. An American woman I know had her hands deformed by rheumatic gout. She used to gaze at them in a way which attracted my attention, so that I asked her one day why she gazed at her hands like this. She told me that one of her Christian Scientist friends had told her that, if she concentrated her thoughts on her hands with the firm desire to have them cured, they would come right again. 'I am trying this,' she said, 'and, if it succeeds, I shall turn Christian Scientist.' I met her again this summer and I had not seen her for six years. I reminded her of this little

episode and asked her, jokingly, whether her hands were cured. ‘No,’ she said, ‘but I am a Christian Scientist all the same. It is a good thing to know where God is!’”

“Splendid!” exclaimed Dr. Henri, with a hearty laugh. “It is so human.”

“Yes, is it not? Her hopes were not realised, but she had found some consolation in them and so clung to the source of this consolation. ‘Provided that one loves some God, what does it matter whether He exists?’”

“A fine sentiment!” exclaimed Maïa.

“Yes, but it is Haraucourt’s, not mine. Christian Science will have done some good in drawing the attention of American doctors to those spiritual forces which we do not yet know how to utilise and which may render the body refractory to suffering. Christian Scientists, with their limbs broken, after an automobile accident, have been seen singing hymns and not appearing to suffer at all. I must own that most of them appear to be absolutely serene and this serenity is not feigned. I once went to one of their meetings. In an ordinary room, without any accessories, and merely thanks to fervent prayer, they succeeded in producing a veritable religious emotion and a few minutes of the most extraordinary silence. All this was a psychical effect, no doubt. I was the only person not affected by it. I felt as though I were in quite a different zone.”

“I prefer Catholicism and the Pope,” declared Maïa, gravely. “There is no prestige about a Mother Eddy as one’s spiritual Head.”

“Catholicism is one of the great religions of the world,” said Dr. Henri, “and, unless I am greatly mistaken, its sanctuary lamp was lighted from that of the

'Aryan and Egyptian sanctuaries and also from that of the tabernacle at Jerusalem."

"No, you are not mistaken," I said. "It is not an upstart religion and it is thoroughly psychical. That is what puts it far above all the religions born of Christianity, in my opinion. Last year, after twenty-five years of absence, I was once more face to face with St. Peter's and the Vatican. My mind was more matured and had become objective. They seemed to me like the great sanctuary of the Western world, a sanctuary built up by the soul of a whole epoch. I felt rather ashamed to think how I had argued and how I had objected to the dogmas which were the materials of which they are built, the materials of all the masterpieces of religious art."

"Yes, but they no longer inspire anyone or anything," said Maïa.

"Their vein is exhausted," I answered. "Think how much they have given. St. Peter's, which is no longer warmed up by great ceremonies and by all the pomp of worship, is much colder now. It is as though something had gone away from it. There is always something impressive about it, thanks to its grandeur and its mystery, but one is no longer affected by it and one scarcely thinks of kneeling down there. More work is being put into it nevertheless. Marble is being sawed and the hammer is to be heard, but there is a certain slowness about the work, a slowness which seems to denote the end."

"Did you not have an audience with the Pope?" asked Maïa.

"Yes, a private audience even."

"Ah, I should like to have seen you," said Dr. Henri, smiling.

"Well, you would have seen a woman who was very nervous and very much upset," I observed. "The emptiness of the Vatican impressed me in the first place. It is a tragical emptiness. No description can give an idea of the sensation this produces. Its magnificent courts are all so lonely. Its staircases, made for the great people of the world, used to be mounted by the Ambassadors of all nations. At present, throngs of humble pilgrims and inquisitive tourists climb up them like so many insects, brushing against the wall or the balustrade. Its rooms are superb, there is a pontifical magnificence about them. At present, the guard of nobles, on service, wander about looking idle and bored, and men who have the appearance of sextons in their Sunday clothes talk in a low voice in the various corners. Thanks to the white silk curtains drawn over the windows, there is a dim, religious light that is somewhat melancholy and the solemn silence gives one a pang at the heart. In the midst of this silence, St. Peter's bell suddenly rang out the Angelus. The sound of its voice came in strong, full waves and seemed like a defiance hurled at death and desolation. These waves of sound seemed to ebb and flow, touching the gilded partitions of the ceiling and the walls covered with rich stuffs and, for a moment, they animated the deserted rooms with psychical life. I thought of the sovereign popes, for whom this palace had been built. Just as I was thinking of them, their successor suddenly appeared to me. He seemed to have come out of the wall, for he arrived quite noiselessly and without any suite. He came straight towards me with short, hurried steps. The contrast gave me such a shock that I forgot to kneel down."

"Oh, Granny!" exclaimed Maïa, laughing. "He must have taken you for a heretic."

"Or for a woman who did not know how to behave, and that is worse. I had been uneasy as to how my poor knees would conduct themselves on account of my rheumatism, and I had taken the precaution to be near a side table, so that I might lean on it if necessary. Our nerves play us false in the most incredible way. Pius X did not appear to notice my breach of etiquette. He glanced at the Lourdes chaplet which I was wearing round my arm. 'What is that beautiful chaplet?' he asked. 'It is one that a good Catholic asked me to bring in order to get Your Holiness's blessing on it,' I answered. 'I bless it,' he said in a warm voice, 'and also the person to whom it belongs.' He then said a few kind words to me and added: 'I bless you, too, and your family and friends.' After this, he passed out into the adjoining room in which a pilgrimage was awaiting him. I followed him and saw the faithful believers kneeling round and forming a square. He offered his ring to some of them to kiss and he spoke a few words to an old Italian peasant woman, who was gazing at him with an expression of ardent faith in her eyes. He then stood in the middle of the room and repeated the phrase he had employed to me: 'I bless you and your families and your friends,' so that it is evidently his formula. He then hurried away quickly, like a person who wants to get a compulsory task over. He evidently does not care for pilgrimages, and yet I am sure he would be sorry if any of them failed to come. He recognised me as he passed by and our eyes met. There was an ironical expression in his and a respectful expression in mine. Oh, he is thoroughly Italian. That

pontifical audience, without any pomp or solemnity, was quite twentieth-century. It seemed to me pathetic that this Pope should be so modern, without knowing that he is, and that he should be serving the very evolution against which he is fighting."

"What impression did you have of Pius X personally?" asked Dr. Henri.

"Well, his face has not the jovial, kindly expression I had expected. It is grave and sad, not hard but hardening. It betrays a hidden and painful irritation and reveals obstinacy, rather than a strong will. He is one of those Italians with a plebeian soul that has been ennobled by idealism, of some kind, and by a sort of intuitive poetry. He belongs to the Italians who are very honest and straightforward at bottom, simple and sober, who do not care for honours and who detest all complications. This democratic Pope, without any majesty and without any pose, who wears a short cassock and whose only insignia are the cross and the ring, does not fill the Vatican. He merely accentuates the emptiness of it. His dogmatic and absolute faith places him in the same tragic situation as the rock beaten by the waves coming from the open sea. He cannot drive them back, but he holds out courageously against their assault. He is worthy of respect like all those who have a cruel rôle. I shall always regret that I did not kneel down when in his presence."

"I fancy that in the distant future the Vatican will be transformed into a museum like our Louvre," said Dr. Henri.

"Perhaps Providence intended the great palaces in the world not for man's dwelling-places, but for his 'accumulators.' Anyhow, St. Peter's is close to the Vatican, there is spiritual life there and the church will

prolong the existence of the palace. Emperors and kings will probably disappear before the popes. Catholicism is now gaining with the Anglo-Saxons the power it is losing with the Latin races. It is making immense progress in America. The Catholic Church educates and instructs a hundred thousand children gratuitously there, and the Government is grateful."

"That is a proof of the force, the intelligence and the humaneness of the Government. Only a weak and petty policy can, because it is afraid, take away the religious devotion and care that was given to the humble, to children and to sick persons, and substitute for that mercenary indifference. Only those who have no care for the welfare of the species can do that. It is true that in the United States the Catholic Church keeps to its benevolent mission. If it had done the same in France, it would not have made itself disliked."

"Ah, well, it is accomplishing its evolution here. Take, for instance, that fine institution, the *Maison Sociale*, the object of which is to protect the young. The secularised nuns are working side by side with Jews, Protestants and even with Freethinkers. Of course, it probably breaks their hearts not to be able to put Catholic symbols in the rooms and not to be able to teach the children the various practices that are dear to them. They renounce all this, so that this human seed, in which they are so deeply interested, may not be taken away from them."

A gleam of tenderness softened the doctor's eyes.

"Ah, all that is very fine," he said.

"How do they protect the young in the *Maison Sociale*?" asked Maïa.

"In the workmen's districts, they have huge rooms to which boys and girls, without any distinction of re-

ligion, can come on leaving school. Instead of a cold, empty house in an unwholesome street, they find well warmed and well lighted rooms, tables, inkpots and pens. They are helped with their home lessons and they find people who are interested in them. This contact with the classes above them gives them a truer idea of things in general. Funds do not yet allow the installation of places where they can wash themselves, by way of acquiring the love of cleanliness. In England and in America, this would have been the first thing and there would even have been flowers in the rooms. An American woman said to me this winter, when we were coming away from one of these places at Ménilmontant: ‘If only I were a very rich person I would have baths put in there for those children. We need a Carnegie in France with a mania for hygiene instead of for libraries.’ ”

“ Municipal councillors capable of understanding the physical and moral value of cleanliness would suffice,” said the doctor.

“ However that may be, this institution of the *Maison Sociale* is managed by very religious women. They do not speak of religion at all, but, as one of the girls who has volunteered to help them observed to me, ‘one feels that it is that which warms their hearts.’ ”

“ It seems,” remarked Maïa, “ as though the various religions ought to be elements of peace, but they have always been elements of discord. It is very odd, that!”

“ But, my dear child,” answered the doctor, “ religions are human. They are the various emanations of the spirituality of the soul. If we could register these emanations we should probably find them of various colours. The Catholic ray must have more shades than the Protestant ray. And all these rays fight

against each other, just as the various perfumes do, and perfumes kill each other."

Maïa looked amazed.

"Oh, Uncle, why have you never said that before?"

"Because you have never asked me questions on this subject. All the various religions are interesting and all of them are infinitely touching. They prove the creature's efforts to approach its Creator. Then, too, they all have some mission to fulfil, as they are all agents of Providence. This is why they may claim to be inspired. Considered separately, they seem childish, but as a whole they are great. They are one of the finest symphonies produced by the human soul and they have given master-pieces to the whole world. Think what a long ladder there is between the rough image carved out by the savage and a Madonna by Raphael, or Michelangelo's *Pietà*."

"And the ladder is not yet at its full length," I added.

"That is quite possible."

"And to think that I feared I should find in you a materialist, Doctor!"

"Did you give your friend that idea of me?" he asked, turning to his niece.

"Did I, Granny?"

"No, I do not think so, but most scientific men scarcely believe in the existence of God and that puzzles me."

"Those who do not must be men who live in their studies or in their laboratories and never look out of the window. They do not feel the movement of life. When one is out of doors, coming into daily contact with Nature and under the influence of divine dynamics, one may be an agnostic, but never an atheist. I do not even be-

lieve in what we call matter as opposed to spirit. Matter is endowed with radio-activity and, thanks to this radio-activity, it is transformed and then dies."

"Oh, well, then, I can tell you an idea that occurred to me, an idea which all my observations corroborate."

"Let me have this idea," said the doctor, leaning back in the corner of his arm-chair, an attitude that always alarms me a little.

"Our cells are living are they not?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, then, I fancy that the body, or rather the brain, with its millions of cells, is simply the generator of the soul."

"Oh, Granny!" exclaimed Maïa.

Dr. Henri's face lighted up with satisfaction.

"And what suggested this hypothesis?" he asked.

"The fact that our thoughts are affected by a hundred different things, by the food we take, by our good health or by disease, by bad or good weather, by the clothes we wear."

"It is quite certain that there are rainy day thoughts and sunshine thoughts," put in Maïa.

"The discovery of radio-activity gave me a flash of light. When I learnt that certain substances emitted rays, fluids and elements, I realised that ideas, thoughts and feelings must be the radio-activity of the body, or rather of the brain, and that this radio-activity made the soul."

"It is quite possible and even probable."

"Fancy the body making the soul," said Maïa, speaking slowly.

"That is its function, I fancy," I said.

"And its *raison d'être*," added Dr. Henri.

"It is created, animated and impressed by universal

force for the sake of alimenting psychical life. When it has given a soul to this, that is its flower and its fruit, it dies in transforming itself, just as everything dies. I suppose that the spirit, which I call 'the other one,' is the most subtle part of the soul.

"The soul distilled—" put in Maïa in her terrible, brusque way.

"You are perhaps speaking more truly than you imagine," said her uncle gravely.

"I like to fancy," I continued, "that the radiant look that comes to the dead is the farewell of the soul to 'its generator.'

"That is a pretty idea," said Maïa. "You both believe in the individuality of the soul?" she continued.

"Certainly," we both replied at the same time.

"It is the work which makes the individuality," continued her Uncle. "Your work is not the same as mine. Each one has his task here below and elsewhere, too, probably."

"That is all right then. I do not like that idea of the great 'All in All,' in which we are to be absorbed."

"Scientific researches seem to be more and more directed towards the psychical zone. When do you think science will really penetrate there?"

The doctor shrugged his square shoulders.

"All in good time," he replied. "The discovery of radio-activity is a great step in that direction."

"That zone is perhaps entirely peopled, and with strange forms?" suggested Maïa.

"I do not doubt that for a second," I replied. "There is nothing supernatural in that. In the drawing-room of my hotel, by a curious arrangement of the mirrors, automobiles, carriages and foot passengers can all be seen arriving and they disappear just as suddenly.

As a matter of fact, they go behind the transparent pane and they are then invisible. Just think of all the methods Nature has for hiding from us what we are not intended to see."

"I have often had the sensation that there is something alive in the ambient air," said Maïa.

"You have had such sensations?" I exclaimed.

"Why not? Have you ever noticed, Granny, on certain days, when you are dressing, that nothing goes right? The hooks catch into the buckles, or on to the most impossible things and your clothes are caught by everything that projects. With the best will in the world, we could not make them catch on to all those things. There seems to be something mischievous in the very air. It is as though there were little spirits or sprites trying to attract our attention. I know what they get from me — all the big words I have in my vocabulary."

"You have big words in your vocabulary?"

"A few."

"Well, all that catching on of our things proves the existence of currents, in the midst of which we are moving about. Whether these currents are animated or not, I cannot tell. You must have noticed that the greater our hurry, the more sure are these phenomena to take place."

"Yes, indeed, I have."

"It is simply because we displace more force of attraction."

"Good observation," said Dr. Henri, smiling.

"Yes, that is possible," remarked Maïa.

"Do you know, Doctor," I continued, "it seems to me that, morally, our planet is wrapped round still with clouds as thick as in the time which you call 'its great

births.' It has not yet caught sight of its great light, the Truth."

"No, it certainly has not, but its atmosphere is lighter, nevertheless. During the last twelve years, God, Providence and Nature have been doing, and are still doing, the most formidable work on our earth. It is as though they are putting the elements here, ready for a new cycle."

"Yes, there are times when I regret that I shall not see the great things that are being prepared," I said.

"You will perhaps be working for them — elsewhere."

"How very cheerful!" exclaimed Maïa, getting up. Just at this moment there was a knock at the door and, on hearing my reply, my hostess entered. I went forward to meet her and brought her to the fire.

"It seems that no one wants tea to-day?" she said, putting her foot on the fender.

"We have had such an interesting conversation," explained Maïa, "that we never thought of the time."

Madame Lasserre glanced at the red and yellow threads on her daughter's dress and then at the handkerchiefs she was holding.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Foolish work," I replied. "Your daughter has had the patience to take the laundress's marks out of my handkerchiefs, and next week they will be in again."

"Oh, not next week," said Madame Lasserre with her kind smile. "What was the subject of this very interesting conversation?" she asked.

"A conversation of miscreants," answered the doctor; "it was not at all suitable for the ears of a saint like you."

This remark took effect, for a little gleam of satisfaction came into my hostess's eyes.

"Well, let us go to tea," she said gaily.

Maïa went into my dressing-room to brush the threads from her dress. On the way downstairs, she said to me quietly:

"Oh, I shall never be able to resist. I must tell Mother about the evolution of the Catechism."

#### *Château de Mortin.*

'At last, I know Maïa's secret. I can now read her whole soul. I know what has caused the dark circles round her eyes,—what makes her bend her head and what causes her young lips to twitch with the struggle she is waging and the grief she is enduring.

I am leaving Mortin the day after to-morrow. I came for a week, or a fortnight at the most, and I have been induced to stay here a whole month. This morning I wanted to bid farewell to St. Francis's Wood, as I always call it. I fancy it will keep that name when I have left.

I met Maïa in the hall just back from her ride. I invited her to go with me and we set out, provided as usual with a bag of seed for the birds. It was wonderful winter weather, cold but dry, with a crispness that was almost metallic. The branches of the trees stood out clearly against the sky which was swept by a north wind. The air was keen and vivifying, like extra-dry champagne, and the ground seemed elastic under our tread. It was a delightful day for walking. I glanced at my companion several times and thought she looked charming. With her bold, delicate outline, her riding habit, her white necktie and felt hat, her thick plait of

golden brown hair fastened up with a black bow, she looked like a great winter bird and just completed the harmony of this bare wood by a human note.

We scattered our seed and the birds came. There were thrushes, robins and magpies and they all came forth from the thickets when their mistress whistled to them. They knew what those bags were, and that they were bags of plenty for them. As we were on the way back to the house, I turned round and looked at the whole scene again.

"I shall often think of this adorable nook," I said admiringly.

"You must see it again in Spring and in Summer. In the Spring it is a regular temple of love and of discord, for the birds quarrel as furiously as they love. The twittering is as young and fresh as the foliage. There are voices practising, inexperienced singers and also masters in the art. It is quite a Conservatoire. In Summer the murmur of this life of insects and birds arrives at its maximum and can be heard a long way off. It is fascinating, as there are waves and waves of music and not one wrong note. We will come and listen to it together. I am glad you have seen our wood, though, in the winter. It was worth a journey, was it not?" continued Maïa, looking round at the scenery before her with fond admiration.

"There are many other things at Mortin, too, that were worth the journey," I said. "I have found the best things there are in the world here: kindness, cultivated intelligence and friendship."

"Thank you, Granny. How I shall miss our dressing-gown chats! Whenever I go by your door I shall have a little pang. If we were not afraid of the damp

for you, after the first rain, we should have insisted on your staying until Christmas, but we dare not take that responsibility."

"I could not possibly have stayed, thank you," I said, "I am obliged to go back now. What are your plans for the Winter?" I asked.

"Well, Miss Lang cannot leave her aunt at present, an aunt who brought her up. I shall therefore make that a pretext for going with the Aurannes to Monte Carlo. I am almost ashamed to say that I am never happy now unless I am travelling."

"Speaking of travelling," I said, "I had a few words from M. de Couzan this morning. He tells me that he is leaving for Bucharest. He reminds me of my promise to dine with him and he invites me for Tuesday if I am back in Paris. Look what a charming letter for a man to write," I added, drawing it out of my pocket.

"No, thank you," said Maïa. "I do not want to read your love-letters. Are you accepting for Tuesday?"

"Yes, I shall like to see M. de Couzan's bachelor's abode. I shall then be able to judge whether my impressions about him are correct."

"Light or dark, do you think?"

"The bachelor's abode?"

"No, the *she*," answered Maïa, whirling the linen bag round that she was carrying.

"What *she*?"

"Your friend's consoler."

"I do not fancy he has a consoler. I should think he is not a man who would have *liaisons*."

"Really!" remarked Maïa with ringing irony. She then stopped short in the middle of the path. "Should

you like me to give you a proof to the contrary?" she asked, putting her hands behind her.

"Yes, if you have a proof to give. I should then be convinced."

I was struck by the expression of Maïa's face. The pupils of her eyes were nearly black, round her nostrils there was a little nervous quivering and her whole face had suddenly become drawn.

"Listen, then, novelist," she began. "About two years and a half ago, I was on my way to the Bries, who had invited me there on a visit. I had a fancy to spend a couple of days at Geneva. I arrived there by the first train and drove to Hotel B——. After a bath, I sent Jenny down to breakfast and had some tea brought up to my room. I sat down in my dressing-gown in front of the little tray, and began to butter the little Swiss rolls. Just at that moment I heard sounds from my next-door neighbours. They were laughing and talking in a low voice. I heard a woman moving about and occasionally bursting into a few lines of song. I imagined that it must be a newly married couple who had risen in a lively frame of mind. Presently a man began to whistle the *bolero* song from Carmen. The bread and knife fell from my hands and the blood rushed to my face, I have no idea why. I listened, in amazement, to the end. It was impossible to doubt it. The whistler was Monsieur de Couzan.

"No!!!” I exclaimed, with a dozen notes of exclamation in my voice.

"Yes, and I heard him say: 'Oh, how happy I am, how happy I am!'"

Maïa's lips quivered, but she went on with her story:

"That was his thanksgiving, probably. You like

ironies," she said. "At any rate, this is one for you, and not by any means an ordinary one."

"And what did you do?" I asked, somewhat bewildered in my astonishment.

"What did I do? I pushed aside my breakfast tray and twisted up my hair again. I then put on my travelling clothes as quickly as Frégoli could have done. I rang for Jenny and told her that we were going on again at once. She thought I had suddenly gone mad. I would not have had her know the little episode for anything in the world. I could not live another second in so ridiculous a situation. Two hours later I was at Valcombe. This is what I meant when I asked you to tell me whether she is dark or light. It would amuse me now to know what his new fancy is like," added Maïa, with a little laugh intended to be ironical, but which was merely full of grief.

"It was just a little adventure," I said, speaking in a light tone. "Men will be men. I am glad it was only Carmen's *bolero* that he whistled. If it had been the 'Prophet's March,' I should have been more uneasy."

Maïa was walking on again.

"I do not know why you should be uneasy," she said, with a shade of haughtiness in her voice.

"I do, though," I remarked quietly.

Just at this moment the cry of the Chouans was heard in the wood. Jacques d'Auranne imitated it admirably. He had learned it from his mother, who was a Vendean. It was to remind us of the luncheon hour and we hurried homewards without uttering another word.

This then was what Maïa had meant when she had said to me one day: "Someone must be to blame for all the horrible things that happen." Yes, I can imagine that the experience was horrible. Thanks to anger,

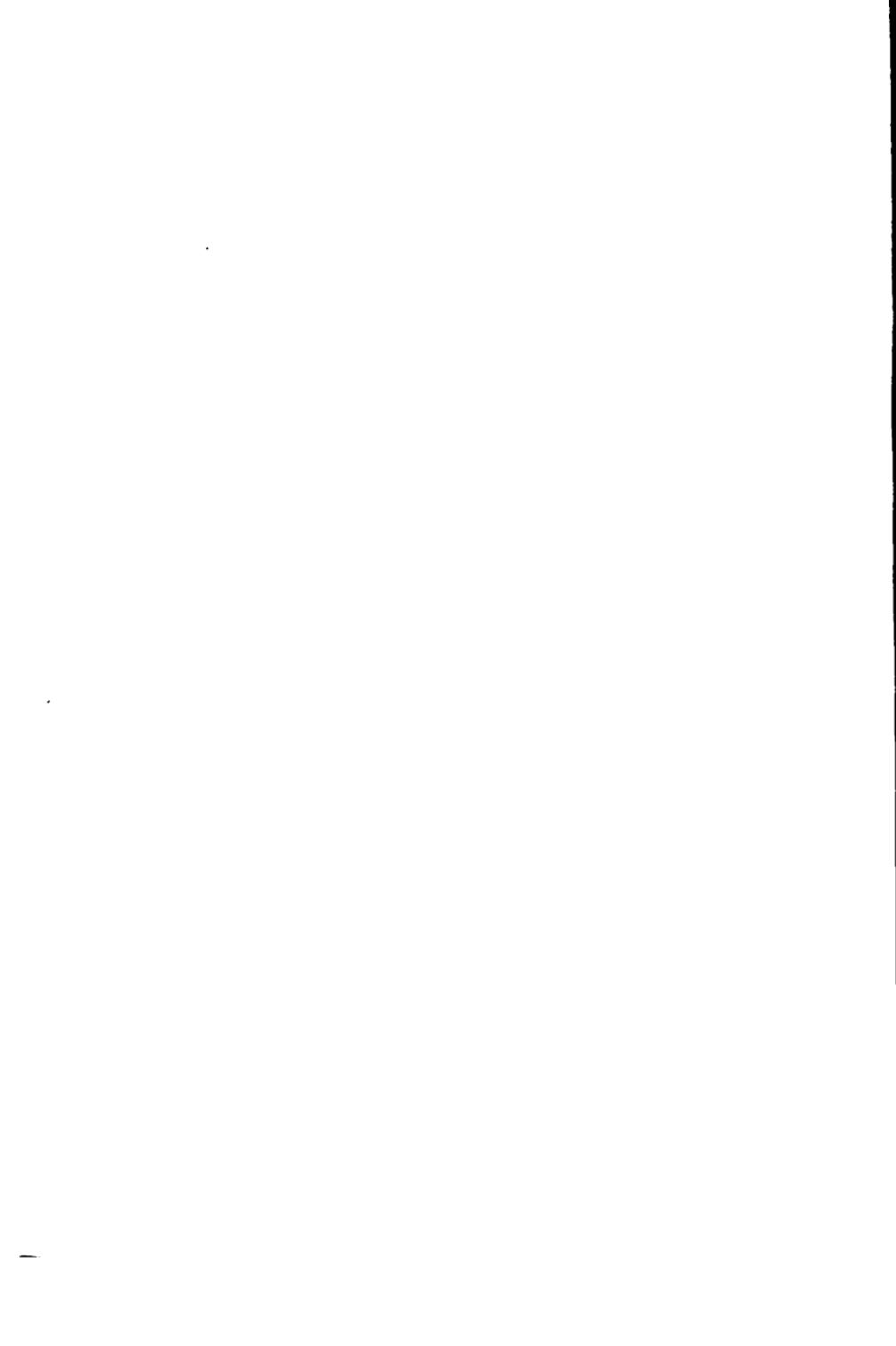
jealousy and grief, her love, the blossoming of which had been delayed by adverse forces, had burst forth suddenly and magnificently.

I feel sure of this. Human laws are not sufficient for marrying or divorcing individuals. Only Nature can do this.

In that hotel bed-room, the young wife had felt that, in spite of all the papers signed and in spite of her lawyer, who was such a treasure, she was still married to Pierre de Couzan.

I can imagine the storm that this revelation had roused within her and all the efforts she had made to kill a sentiment which humiliated her doubly. She had probably imagined the scene which she had not witnessed in the next room, and with details which were not at all authentic. This scene had probably been reproduced thousands of times in her brain, enough times to have made some miles of films. Each time it was thus reproduced, the love that she hoped to destroy was quickened, for it is ever like this in the human soul and the experience is very painful. M. de Couzan's joyful exclamation had penetrated her heart through and through and, whatever may be in store for her in the future, she will hear it always.

The reader who asked me to make my heroine suffer may be satisfied, for she certainly is suffering — and she is very brave over it.



**V**

**PARIS**



## V

*Paris.*

AH, no more Louis XV furniture, no more dressing table with curved feet, no more rose-wood book-cases and no more beautiful pastels on the walls! No more pretty things around me! After Mortin, the first contact with the hotel again was not exactly agreeable. In my well-warmed room, though, there were various tokens of friendship. There were flowers, visiting cards and a beautiful plant. The last was my landlady's way of welcoming me back, for, in one way or another, she always lets me feel this welcome. Then, too, there were all the kind, honest faces of those who make my life more pleasant by undertaking its drudgeries. All this gave me the sensation of being *at home*. And now, seated at my writing table, I do not know whether I am living in a *château* or in the *Travellers's Home*, and it matters little which, such is the divine magic of the "book."

A voice comes to me from the street and I recognise it with great pleasure. I always listen for it anxiously each time I return to Paris. It is the voice of a neighbour of mine, a big dog. Loute has the most melodious voice I ever heard, a voice that is certainly a soprano. It barks from morning to night and yet no one could complain. It acts as policeman in the short street in which it lives, and seems to consider that street as its own private domain. It walks along with shabbily dressed individuals as far as the corner, growling gently as though saying: "Go away, I do not want you here."

It literally talks to a little bulldog who lives near, with whom it is on friendly terms. Loute's voice is at times caressing, angry or nervous, and reveals a whole scale of human sentiments and a feminine soul. At times, it says such pretty things that I stop writing, listen for a moment and sometimes say aloud: "Oh, you darling!" The idea that, in the name of science and humanity, thousands of good, affectionate creatures like that should be tortured, makes me wild with indignation. It is not only vivisection that is so revolting, but the cruelty, the injustice and the ingratitude of the human species towards the animal species. In France, Italy and Spain, the horse is still as badly treated as the donkey in the East. Whenever I think of this, the Latin race, to which I belong myself, is odious to me and I am obliged to pull myself up in order to judge fairly.

Men may be cruel — thanks either to primordial instinct, to ignorance, to thoughtlessness, to lack of sensitiveness or even to sheer habit. The lower classes suffered for a long time from this kind of cruelty. They have now acquired force sufficient to permit them to escape from it, but they take their revenge in exercising it in their turn, and the helpless animal is always the victim.

Men do not know what the animal is. They neither know its rôle nor its mission here below, and they do not realise their obligations to it. The question as to the existence of a soul in the animal has puzzled savants in their materialism and priests in their dogmas. They have therefore left it unanswered. Civilised men have been obliged to recognise that the inferior races of the globe have souls. They have yet to learn that the animal has one, too. How could it be otherwise, since all life is the radio-activity of the Eternal God? All life

is, therefore, a soul. There are souls with only two cells, like that of an ant, and with millions of cells, like that of man. It is the number of cells which creates the different scales of beings, and all beings are brothers, psychologically and physiologically. It is therefore evident that the animal loves and suffers as we do; he has speech as we have; this speech may be a bark, a mew, a song, but it expresses sentiments just as French or German does.

The animal is not outside humanity, but an integral part of it, as we absorb its substance in all kinds of different forms. By hidden and wonderful transformations, this substance becomes so many elements of our thought and of our immortal soul. We hold communion by it and through it with all Nature. In our clothes, in our food, in the construction of our dwellings, there is always something of its pain and of its suffering.

“The Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep,” says the Gospel. This is an image, but it is not only an image that the sheep constantly give their life for their shepherd. If only men could conceive the profoundness of this fraternity, they would not, in their own interest, injure the flesh destined to become their own flesh, and they would not refuse to give the animal food which is transformed into energy for their own benefit. Men are not only cruel through ignorance, but also from habit. We get used to the suffering of others.

I was reproaching a Frenchman for going to the bull-fights in Spain and he gave me the following frightful reply: “The first time one sees them one is horrified, and quite inclined to tell the spectators that they are savages. Afterwards one gets used to them and finally

acquires a taste for them!" Imagine acquiring a taste for seeing horses disembowelled. Yes, that is how one can go down again each rung of the ladder of civilisation. It is so easy! In the same way, the Parisian cabman gets used to seeing a badly-fed beast trotting before him. He gets used to seeing the poor beast fall down between the shafts, and he helps him up again until the day comes when the worn-out animal can no longer get up. Parisians, too, have become accustomed to be dragged along by these wretched horses and they are not at all ashamed of it. In reality, this is the indifference of so many barbarians. It is time that Science taught us our real obligations, our duty towards animals. Christianity, which came to us from the East, has never defended or protected them. It is quite time that it should extend its charity now. The man of the twentieth century, like primitive man, is obliged to live by hunting and fishing. He has to kill in order to live. That is the law of the Earth. He ought to do this in a manly way, as mercifully and with as little suffering as possible for his victim. He ought to consider himself as the executor of Nature's works and not as a torturer.

The man of the twentieth century can no longer ignore the animal. He ought to study its language,—its instincts, its habits, its character, its soul and try to make himself understood by animals. It is in his interest to do this if it is not his pleasure. The man of the twentieth century ought to treat animals justly and fairly, and remunerate their work by sufficient food. Strict laws ought to oblige him to do his duty until the time comes when humanity will be capable of doing it willingly and lovingly. The eighteenth century proclaimed the rights of man, the nineteenth century the

rights of woman. This twentieth century should proclaim the rights of animals.

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Whilst I have been writing these lines, Loute's voice has never ceased to urge on my pen and my thoughts. Dear old Loute, it little thinks that it has been working for the cause of its species. God grant that neither the dog's work nor mine shall be fruitless.

*Paris.*

Maïa's story caused me great uneasiness. At Évian and Territet, more particularly at Territet, I had felt sure that Pierre de Couzan still loved his wife. I was not so sure of this after what Maïa had told me and I wanted to find out. It was, therefore, with the firm intention of reading his home and his face, of vivisecting him, that I went to dine with him the other evening, and I now breathe freely once more, as all my fears have vanished.

My host came for me with his automobile. He asked me on the way how I had liked Mortin. I replied enthusiastically, but without going into details about my visit, as I wanted to see him under a good electric light when I told him about everything. He informed me that he was leaving the next evening for Bucharest and that he should stay there five or six weeks. He is going there, with one of his partners, to study a most interesting project for a new route. We talked of this until we reached Rue Chanaleilles. When the automobile horn was sounded, the gates were opened and we passed through.

"It seems far away from Paris, here," I remarked, as we went up the wide staircase:

"And even from our epoch," added my host. "This

stillness and silence seem delightful to me on coming away from the factory." He was quite right, for, on entering his flat, I noticed that everything was in good style and seemed to belong to former days.

I went first to visit his study and this gave me a very good impression. The fire was burning brightly, the electric light was well placed, the folding doors at the end were open, showing a billiard room beyond; a little black bulldog and a white Angora cat were warming themselves on the hearth. The dog sprang forward to meet his master, but the cat contented itself with looking round at us.

"My two companions, Joe and Manon," said M. de Couzan. "I have a Savoy man and his wife as servants, François and Marianne, and that is my whole bachelor establishment."

"What a luxury to have plenty of space!" I exclaimed.

"Well, I do not like to tramp about on the same spot," he answered. "You see, I come from the mountains and I have long legs."

"And you are a good size," I added, looking at the young man's fine, sturdy figure. I glanced round the room. Under the high ceiling, with its delicate mouldings, and in this elegant setting of an old eighteenth century drawing-room, there was English furniture. I saw some immense arm-chairs, an imposing looking writing table, a book-shelf mounted on a support, a huge divan and a piano. The contrast would have been rather unpleasant if it had not been for various objects of art which modified all this, and for the comfort and the sensation of life which made one forget it.

"What is that?" I asked, moving towards a marble figure, the whiteness of which seemed to light up one

corner of the room. My host turned on an electric light placed over this strange figure and turned the pedestal round.

"It is the ancestor," he replied.

The ancestor . . . a naked man looking out for prey! His left hand was clenched round the rock and in his right hand he held a sort of club. His body was long and flexible, like that of a feline creature, and it was agitated by waiting and by ferocious desire. The tension of the muscles and of the bestial face made it seem extremely living and painful.

"Ah, poor ancestor!" I said filled with pity.

"Poor ancestor!" repeated the Baron. "But he had not so many brain cells," he said, laying his hand on the low forehead of this primitive specimen of humanity. "He had not so many thoughts and feelings, so much nonsense about him. It was only his body that was cold!"

He spoke with a note of violence and bitterness in his voice, which did not escape me.

"Do you know," I said, "that it is very effective to see them here together, side by side, the ancestor in the midst of the struggle for life and the descendant, in a smoking jacket with a flower in his buttonhole, waiting for dinner?"

Pierre de Couzan smiled and twisted his moustache.

"The descendant, in a smoking jacket with a flower in his buttonhole, is struggling for something else," he remarked.

"I like this ancestor," I said, stroking the figure.

"I do, too. I discovered it in a young sculptor's studio and bought it there and then."

"Well, I fancy you bought a very fine work. Let me admire your other treasures," I said.

"Oh, I am not a collector and I have a horror of gimcracks for the mere sake of collecting."

There were three fine pictures of the Impressionist school: *Le Lac de Roy*, in Savoy, a *Dawn* and a *Sunset*, also in Savoy, some etching studies and pen-and-ink drawings, three admirable little bronzes, some Japanese masks, some arms and pipe racks. Two huge ferns were unfurling their leaves in old Japan vases. The skins of some royal animals were spread over the divan and carpet. There was no attempt at anything pretentious and there were no fads in this study.

It gave me the impression of a room belonging to a gentleman, to a young, active, and very virile man. It was evidently not arranged with a view to lady visitors. Just as I had come to this satisfactory conclusion, dinner was announced. The dining-room had the same masculine and English look. The gay blaze from the fire, and the flowers which decorated the table, softened the severity and the heaviness of the furniture.

"Your friends surely accuse you of Anglomania," I observed, noticing that the silver, glass and china were also English.

"Oh, yes, they do not spare me, but it does not matter to me. I need simplicity and comfort."

"When did you learn English and how did you acquire English tastes?"

"Oh, I owe all that to the Fathers and I am very grateful to them. It appears that when I was twelve or thirteen, I showed alarming signs of lack of discipline. My mother, after the manner of all pious women, confided her anxiety to her confessor. Father Luc, who had lived in England, advised her to send me to a Jesuit college, near London, so that I might go in for

sports. He persuaded her that this would be the salvation of me, both in this world and the next. This was quite enough for her and I was packed off to W—. I stayed there until I was sixteen. Thanks to an excellent French professor, my studies did not suffer. It was a very hard time for me at first, but I gradually learnt to use my fists and to exercise self-control, and after this all went very well. I acquired not only a taste for sports, but the spirit of the true sportsman, too."

"Ah, that is what I should like all our young people taught, boys and girls alike."

"Yes, they ought to be taught the meaning of that admirable and untranslatable expression: 'to play the game,' that is to play it strictly and correctly, in spite of all adverse circumstances, to the very end. When an Englishman is faced by a difficult situation, if he says, 'I will play the game,' he does play it, in face of death even, if necessary. When I went to Liège to take up my engineering studies once more, I used to keep repeating that phrase and it inspired me all the time, so that I would not have given way until I had accomplished the end I had in view. That is the true sporting spirit. When I have a son, I shall send him to England at the age of twelve, and he will stay there until he is sixteen. If he only learns to 'play the game,' I shall be satisfied."

"When I have a son." I was struck by the assurance with which he said this, although he was probably speaking quite unconsciously. I looked at the young man, at his energetic face and I noted the signs of his fine moral and physical wholesomeness. I felt sure, too, that he would have a son, some day.

"At Mortin," I said, "I had the opportunity of

comparing, once more, French and English hospitality. I have come to the conclusion that if ever the French and English arrive at understanding each other, it will be by means of signs, like dumb people."

"Well, that would be enough, I suppose, for the progress of the two nations."

"Yes, I think so."

The domestic poured some limpid, pale gold-coloured wine into my glass.

"You are responsible for Seyssel with sole," remarked my host. "I am incapable of such heresy."

"Yes, I know, but I like it, because it has a taste of flint and I discovered that this goes very well with fish."

"May you enjoy it!"

"Did it occur to you, when you covered your table with roses, that your guest was an old woman?" I asked.

"No, I simply remembered that my guest was a woman."

"Ah, that is very nice, thank you," I said. I bent my head and inhaled the perfume of the roses that marked my place at table.

"American Beauties," I remarked, "and they certainly are beauties."

"By the bye, were not those girls Americans with whom you were lunching on the terrace of the restaurant at Royat, about three years and a half ago? There were four of them, all dressed in white, with the most wonderful, bright hair."

"Yes, they were Californian girls. I surnamed them the '*Roussottes*,' on account of the colour of their hair. I see that they made an impression on you."

"I should think they did. Your table was the only

one which had any life and gaiety. I felt tempted to come and speak to you, but on reflection I only bowed."

"I regret the result of your reflection."

"And so did I. I had just come to bring my mother who was to take the waters. I only stayed two days and I never spoke to anyone but the '*Belle Meunière*.' Where were you staying?"

"At the ex-convent, twenty minutes away from Royat. These Californian girls had told me of it. It is on the heights, facing Clermont, in the midst of a park which leads down to the valley, and the slopes are covered with vines. The view from the terrace is superb. At sunset, the Cathedral is the shade of reddish velvet."

"Like the Volvic lava."

"The evolution of the convent into a boarding-house is very curious. There were two principals, one secular and the other a former nun. The bed-rooms are pretty and comfortable, the table a sort of convent mixture. Most of the servants are either ex-Sisters, or very pious women with a mystical expression in their eyes. The dining-rooms are still adorned with statues of saints. Just above my little table I had a portrait of Leo XIII. The chapel is very beautiful and there is Mass there every morning. This gave a sort of religious silence to our floor, and every evening the pious ex-Sisters could be seen gliding furtively into the chapel. What a psychological study all that made! At the upper end of the park there was a little chapel, by the side of which several nuns had been buried. They seemed so deserted up there. One felt that they belonged to an order of things which had had its day, and all this was infinitely pathetic."

"How do American women put up with such things?"

"Oh, the novelty of such surroundings amuses them, they even enjoy it. The Clermont confectioners must remember them with regret. With their freshness and absolute freedom, their brilliant complexion and beautiful hair, they seemed to light up the old streets through which they went. I was specially interested in one of them. We used to go for walks together and we talked for hours in the shady nooks of the park. She used to tell me about San Francisco and she spoke of their country home with a warmth and passion which I have since felt was the effect of a sort of presentiment, for, a few months later, the whole place was destroyed by the earthquake.

"One morning, she and I had an extraordinary experience. I was writing my book on England and had come to a terrible stand-still. I had asked my young friend to let me read a few chapters to her, as I hoped that might set my motor going again. We went to a little summer arbor situated on the heights and Miss J—— worked at her embroidery while I read. After I had been reading for some little time, my companion nudged me and said in a very low voice: 'Look.'

"I raised my eyes from my manuscript and saw a huge, yellowish serpent sitting up on his tail. He seemed to be positively listening. I was silent for a moment and he at once disappeared in his hole. He was quite a harmless sort of serpent, so that there had really been no danger."

"And what about your stand-still?"

"Oh, it was over. I began to write again that very evening. Serpents bring good luck."

"To women only then. But now, do tell me what brought you out on the Clermont road at five in the morning? I saw you there the day I was leaving. I was driving my motor car and you did not notice me."

"No, I certainly did not. I must have been on the way to the baths. I used to walk for about forty minutes out in the fresh air, with the green hedges on either side of me and, as I listened to the singing of the birds, I felt quite young again. Formerly I was stupidly prejudiced against Auvergne. It was thanks to those Californian girls that I found out how beautiful it is and that I learnt to admire Royat with its balconies full of flowers. That is another example of the wonderful way in which things are all linked together in life."

The presence of the domestic prevented our talking about Mortin. We spoke on all kinds of subjects and our conversation was very animated. I felt that my host was experiencing a kind of secret joy. He was unconscious of it himself, but it shone in his eyes and burst out in triumphal notes in his voice. In spite of myself, the picture which Maïa's story had presented to my mind kept coming back to me. I could see this young, healthy man waking up in the morning and uttering those words, the tragic echo of which had been overheard in the adjoining room. I could scarcely help smiling as I thought of all this and I said to myself: "Ah, if he only knew!"

I then began to think of Maïa and I pictured her loneliness at table with her family. What would she not have given to be there in my place. My over-excited imagination began to conjure up the most daring theatrical situations. When once the exquisite little

dinner was over, we went back to the study, where Joe and Manon, like well brought-up animals, were awaiting us.

The man-servant followed us in, bringing the most fragrant Turkish coffee.

"You can smoke your pipe," I said to my host.

"Thanks, but I never smoke my pipe except when I am alone," he replied. "It is so absorbing that it makes me impolite. A cigar will keep your cigarette company better than a pipe."

The Angora cat immediately sprang up on the arm of its master's chair, arranged its tail round its feet, and looked at Joe with half-shut eyes, as though jeering at him. The dog, with its ears pricked up and its back shuddering with jealousy, complained in a gentle way at this.

"Ah, what a nice picture," I exclaimed. "I should like to have your photograph taken in this way."

Pierre de Couzan got up, walked across to his writing table, opened one of the drawers and, taking out a photograph, handed it to me.

"There you are," he said, "you see you have only to express a wish."

He then stooped down and patted the dog.

"Lie down, you jealous old dog," he said, and the animal, happy and tranquil once more, turned over on his side.

"The portrait is excellent and the whole scene very life-like," I remarked, delighted. "I may keep it of course?"

"Oh, yes, it is one of the works of art of my man. François is passionately fond of photography and he really has a talent for it. I encourage him in it."

"Quite right, too," I said.

My host smoked quietly for a few seconds and I sipped my delicious coffee slowly and then put the cup down on the tray.

"It is very pleasant to have you here in my bachelor den," said my host, glancing at me, with an affectionate expression in his eyes.

"It is very extraordinary how it has all come about," I remarked. "After all, though, it is not any more extraordinary than my visit to Mortin. Just think, ten years ago, at St. Pierre du Vauvray, I suddenly got into the train with my future hostesses. They were not very well pleased to have me in their compartment, and this amused me during the journey."

"Ten years ago? About what time in the year?"

"It was the third of November," I answered.

"Oh, that is odd," he exclaimed, striking the arm of his chair so vehemently that Manon started. "Why, it was on the arrival of that train that I fell in love at first sight."

"You fell in love at first sight?" I repeated, bewildered.

"Yes, I had gone to the station to meet a friend. When the train arrived, I saw a girl spring out and fling her arms round M. Lasserre's neck. I only knew the banker by sight at that time. The child-like gesture made a great impression on me. You can have no idea how it affected me. Afterwards I met Maïa several times, but I kept out of her way as much as possible. I had made up my mind not to marry early, but to travel before settling down. When Madame de Syriac spoke of Mademoiselle Lasserre to me and seemed to think that there were chances in my favour, I threw all my plans and resolutions to the winds. You see now what an effect a mere gesture may have."

"Yes, and it was one of your gestures, just a kindly action that made Maïa decide in your favour. She fell in love with you when you helped a horse up on the Boulevard Malesherbes."

The young man's dark eyes shone more brightly for a second and then, putting his head on one side, and with a mocking smile under his moustache, he said: "If falling in love is to be effective, it must be simultaneous you see, otherwise there is nothing in it."

"Really!" I answered, "well, I am glad to know that. All these little psychological observations are very valuable to me. I see that you are studying Natural History now and that you have not forgotten our conversation at Territet."

"How could I forget a conversation in which you told me that I had been an imbecile. Ah, no, certainly I have not forgotten that."

"Monsieur de Couzan!" I exclaimed, by way of protesting.

"Oh, do not apologise, you were perhaps right," said the young man, smiling, and then, as though wishing to change the conversation, he added: "Who else was staying at Mortin?"

"Monsieur d'Auranne and his wife, a charming Englishwoman, and the Comtesse de Bielle. My hosts were perfectly delightful."

"Oh, the Lasserres are excellent people. They are very typical of that upper middle class which was such an honour to France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That type of family is gradually disappearing. I am sure that you and Dr. Henri are good friends?"

"I hope so," I answered.

"He is a remarkable man and so absolutely fair and just."

I was delighted to see that M. de Couzan bore no grudge to his ex-family. Thanks to this fact, I was able to give him a more detailed account of my visit and to tell him various incidents connected with Maïa. He listened in an apparently unmoved way, but I noticed the way in which he lowered his eyelids occasionally and I knew by the twitching of his moustache that my words were not thrown away.

"Which rooms did you have?" he asked.

"The Bishop's."

"I thought you would."

"I feel rathered cramped now in my hotel bed-room, but it is not the luxury I miss so much as the chats with Maïa at night, by my bed-room fire. She used to come in, wearing one of her pretty dressing gowns, with her hair hanging down her back in a plait like a young girl. She would sit down on the floor and, with the firelight falling on her, she was simply adorable."

I had sketched this little scene with all the pleasure of an artist and with the cruelty of a psychologist. I was delighted to think that my words would be stamped on some cells of this man's brain, this living receiver here, in front of me, and that they would do their fascinating work there.

My host, who had been looking away, now glanced at me, his eyes bright with humour.

"And during one of those chats, I have no doubt you gave Madame Maïa Lasserre a few notions about Natural History?" he said.

"Yes, just a few," I answered, calmly.

"I am glad to hear that, for she was remarkably ignorant —"

"And I should like her to have an opportunity of turning them to account," I said, interrupting him.

"Yes, I should too —"

M. de Couzan uttered these words involuntarily and turned furiously red afterwards.

"I hope that all kinds of good things may be reserved for her yet," I went on. "When I saw her at Mortin, alone, the odd one out, as it were, it seemed to me that she had been the victim of an illusion —"

"She is perhaps quite happy with her illusion though," remarked my host, but I noticed that there was an anxious, questioning look in his eyes.

"Oh, no, she is not, and I should not like her to be either. She is quite aware that she has spoilt her life, that she has caused grief all around her and I am sure that she blames herself bitterly. She owned to me that she is only happy now when she is travelling. After Christmas, she is to go with the Aurannes to Italy — to Monte Carlo."

"To Monte Carlo?"

I heard a joyful note in my companion's voice, as he repeated these words after me.

"Yes," I continued, "and she intends accompanying her friends as far as Marseilles, as they are going on from there to Japan. What consoles me is the fact that Maïa is young and, attractive as she is, happiness may suddenly come to her when she is least expecting it."

I looked at the clock as I uttered these words.

"Ten o'clock already," I exclaimed, "and I want to see the rest of your abode before leaving."

"I will show it you with pleasure," said my host.

The flat took up the whole of the second storey of the house. It had evidently been a very beautiful one in

its day. Modern appointments have spoilt its former elegance, but made it extremely comfortable. There are good bath and dressing rooms, a gymnastic room and three bed-rooms.

In his mother's room there is beautiful old furniture and I noticed also a praying chair, a crucifix and all the symbols dear to the hearts of devoted Catholics. The other two rooms contrasted drollly with this one. They were in English style and extremely masculine looking. My host's room delighted me. It seemed to have been arranged solely for the purpose of sleep at night and rest in the daytime. There was a brass bedstead and a sort of folding bed as a sofa. Then there were two large arm-chairs, two ordinary chairs, a desk and a few books. The floor was covered with delicate Japanese matting, upon which were two or three superb wolf skin rugs. On the walls were family portraits and portraits of friends. Then there were various pictures of horses and dogs and some pencil sketches. The windows were wide open. I saw no sign of the presence of a woman anywhere, and I admired everything unreservedly.

"Is your spare room often occupied?" I asked when we were back in the study.

"Yes, nearly always, and very often by English friends. I very rarely dine alone."

"Your home confirms the opinion I had about you," I remarked, calmly.

"May I know what it was?"

"Well, I fancied you were free and not in the clutches of anyone."

I expressed myself in this somewhat vulgar manner by way of treating my veiled question more lightly.

M. de Couzan laughed heartily.

"In the clutches of anyone? Thank God, no. My idea is that the only bond a man can have with any dignity is the conjugal one. He is always, more or less, the lord and master of his wife, but he is only the slave of his mistress."

I could scarcely help smiling as I thought of the woman who had made him so happy on a certain day and I murmured to myself: "O men, men!"

"I like your flat too, because there is nothing 'old bachelor' looking about it. In spite of all the comfort though, it is cold. It lacks just the same thing that is lacking at Mortin."

The young man glanced at me questioningly.

"Yes," I continued, "happiness."

Pierre de Couzan shrugged his shoulders.

"I am too wise to run after it a second time in my life," he said, "but I can assure you that if it came and knocked at my door, I should make it very welcome."

"Ah, well, then," I said, "I will bring it to you."

These words left my lips just as though someone else had prompted them. I got up feeling quite confused and held my hand out to say farewell. He pressed it to his lips and then clasped it cordially in his.

"My dear novelist," he said in an affectionate, but rather mocking tone.

He then took me home and on the way we scarcely exchanged a word, but we parted with the consciousness and the satisfaction of having a private understanding.

The following day, I wrote an account of my evening at Rue Chanaleilles to Maïa. By this time, unless I am very much mistaken, that letter will have been read and re-read many times. The ideas and thoughts of these two human creatures, who were first united and then separated, have, no doubt, been trying to meet

again in space for a long time. When once they do meet all pride, vanity and grudges will vanish and a great force will spring out of two weaknesses.

*Paris.*

I have gone back to my meditations as a solitary woman. I have just been meditating on dress and chiffons, but in quite a different way from the manner in which I looked upon these things in former days.

It seems so frivolous to be thinking of dress and yet the question of dress is alarmingly serious. It seems such a petty subject and it is an immense one.

My mind has been working slowly for a long time and I have at last begun to realise something of the rôle that dress and fashions play on our earth. They now seem to me to be one of the great factors of Life. They are subject to laws of which we know nothing. They have an influence on character, on habits and customs and on health. They play their part in the destinies of individuals and of nations and, like those destinies, they are in the hands of the Divine forces.

The Eternal God does not only clothe the flowers of the field. He clothes animals and human beings too. Flowers and animals are clothed with more outward magnificence, because the splendour of man depends on the splendour of the soul. The animal's clothing and adornment grows on its back. There is an admirable economy about this, a profound lesson and there also seems to be humour in the arrangement.

Mother Nature transforms vegetable substance into animal substance, into fur, fleece, feather, tortoise-shell and silk and then, with these valuable materials, she completes man. To all appearances, human beings make their own clothing, but Nature really directs and

inspires them. She it is who ties the cotton garments of the negro, who drapes the costume of the Oriental, who cuts the dress coat of the Westerner, who pierces the nose of the savage and the ear of the civilised woman, who plaits the African woman's hair and waves the hair of the Parisian woman.

Nature puts the idea of a hat or a dress into the mind of the milliner and the dressmaker, just in the same way as she inspires the mind of a painter with his picture.

The idea is at first vague, but by an effort of thought power it becomes distinct. In order to carry out the idea, the fingers are set to work. They experiment, make and unmake and often, just when the individual is beginning to despair of being able to carry out the idea, with a single fresh touch the thing is suddenly created. The model which was only in the mind is then there in the hand. It is a visible, tangible thing and it enters into the current like a new-born child.

Those who make clothes have no idea of the important rôle they are playing in the world. They put the finishing touch on the human creature. They are collaborating with Providence. They are not merely work-people employed by the person who pays them, but work-people employed by Life itself. They have no idea of this themselves yet.

Fashion, about which so much has been written and said, seems to me a natural phenomenon, the changes of which are not governed by caprice, but by necessity, in order to bring into use the wool of fleeces, the silk of cocoons, furs, feathers, precious stones, and other beautiful things.

The divine Provider alone knows the economic wealth of Nature and no one else can direct the employment of

this wealth. Clothing and adornment are one of the themes of our Earth. This theme is only composed of a few notes. The same notes are repeated constantly, with infinite variations.

It is, perhaps, in this phenomenon of Fashion that the continual work of Providence on the human creature can be more clearly distinguished. All kinds of changes and experiments are tried and the very outline of the human figure undergoes the most curious modifications. At times it is enlarged out of all proportion, and then it is just as strangely diminished. It is next lengthened out and afterward shortened, but its insectlike shape is always preserved.

Of late years, men's necks have been imprisoned in stiff collars. Perhaps this has been to teach them to hold their heads up. It is by means of the corset that Nature keeps a woman's body in shape. This is constantly being remodelled. There is an attempt made to improve it and sometimes just the opposite result is obtained, but the experiments continue. All these changes have their *raison d'être*, which may be plastic, economic, hygienic or even anti-hygienic. In stagnant nations, these fashion waves are scarcely felt. The Arab's *burnous* and his wife's *gandoura* have not changed for centuries. These garments are admirably suited to the slow movements of their wearer's life. The costume of a country is in more or less perfect harmony with the setting and character of that country. The costume reveals the mentality of an epoch and is part of its history.

The gods have taken away from the males of active races their silks, laces and feathers and have substituted clothes without ornamentation, more suitable to the age of coal and petroleum. The man of the twen-

tieth century does not look like a brilliant coleopter but like a useful working one.

The tailor-costume for woman marks her entrance into social and economic work and the era of her emancipation. May she never forget this!

In order to fight with the Russians, the Japanese discarded their dresses and put on European coats, which gave more freedom to their limbs. In a war between trousers and dresses, the dresses would certainly have been conquered.

At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, women's necks, shoulders and arms were bared and then severely veiled. About ten or twelve years ago, English women inaugurated the era of lace embroidery for covering the bare neck and arms. Nature, perhaps, required this contact with the air, so that there might be beautiful shoulders and arms once more. It certainly is high time, as there are very few to be seen now.

The extravagance of the present fashions shows that there is a struggle of adverse forces going on. Just when woman is proclaiming her independence and endeavouring to conquer her individuality, the opposing gods frame her head with farmyard feathers, making her look like her primitive ancestors.

They give her mushroom shaped hats to wear, which make her look small, and lamp-shade ones, which make her look insignificant.

They imprison her in narrow, sheath-like dresses, which restrict her physical liberty and lessen her vitality, so that she returns, bound hand and foot, to the masculine yoke.

A sort of selection is now taking place and, after this, there will probably be those who have been de-

scribed by some writers as the *haremists*, and then the women who are free. The latter will adopt the plain, practical costume, which one can wear for visiting rich and poor alike, the costume in which the body keeps its real beauty and has freedom of movement. Such women will know how to make use of dress, without ever being the slave of it, and that will surely be the ideal way of dressing.

We speak of a fashion "taking" or "not taking," and this expression is perfectly correct.

The fashion which takes becomes photographed in the mind of the greater number, it takes possession of the eye, the taste and the imagination. The fashion, which for some unknown reason, does not take, is like an unsuccessful photograph. At certain epochs, the changes of fashion are almost imperceptible and then, all at once, a radical change takes place and the agent of this is always a genial artist.

A certain incident connected with the evolution of the hat interested me very much. It prepared the evolution of the whole costume and the effects of it are still to be seen. The woman to whom this evolution is due, was living in quite an unfashionable part of Paris. The hats she made attracted the attention of certain buyers who secured them and sold them to well-known milliners, so that Madame V—— neither had the glory nor the full profit of her creations. One day, when she was walking along in the Rue de la Paix, she saw that there was a first floor flat to let. Out of sheer curiosity and, as she told me herself, without dreaming of what she was going to do, she went to the *concierge* and asked to see it. Whilst she was going through the rooms, she pictured herself there making and selling hats. She saw, in her imagination, a workroom full

of girls and a show-room full of elegant customers and, under the influence of her own suggestion, she took the flat.

Her husband, who was not an enterprising man, blamed her for her foolhardiness. Not in the least discouraged, she assured him that, when once she was in the Rue de la Paix, she should make her fortune. She took her needles and scissors, and above all her taste, with her and set to work to make hats. When she had about a dozen models ready, she wrote the following letter to Princess Metternich:

“Princess:

“I am told that I have talent as a milliner.  
“I shall not believe it myself unless the woman  
“who dresses the best in Paris confirms this.  
“May I ask Your Highness to do me the  
“favour and the honour of coming to the Rue  
“de la Paix to see my models.”

The celebrated society women, who was at the same time a kind-hearted princess, responded to the invitation. She soon recognised the hall mark of an excellent milliner and bought several of the model hats. She showed them to the Empress, who admired them immensely. Madame V—— was requested to go to the Tuileries and, from that time forth, her ship sailed well.

One Sunday afternoon, about the year 1865, she was walking up the Champs Elysées with her husband, when her eyes were directed towards the bonnet which a woman just in front of her was wearing. According to the fashion of the moment, there was a curtain to the bonnet. Up to then she had liked this style, but it now appeared grotesque to her. She noticed that,

as the woman walked, the curtain flapped and gave an idiotic look to the wearer. This defect struck her for the first time. Why she had never noticed it before is the secret of the gods.

"I must do away with it," she said aloud.

"With what?" asked her husband, bewildered.

"The curtain to bonnets."

"Oh, bonnets be hanged," said M. V—— irately.  
"You never see anything but bonnets, even at the theatre."

This was true, for she was a great artist. The idea which had taken possession of her never left her, and this is usually the case with ideas that are destined to make their way. As soon as she was at home, she took her wire and stiffening and cut and twisted a piece into all kinds of shapes until she obtained what she was aiming at. When the stroke of genius came, she had invented the *fanchon* and from that time forth the curtain disappeared. Later on, she did away with strings tied under the chin. This innovation, leaving the lower part of the face free, made women look younger. Madame V—— prided herself on being able to make a woman look ten or fifteen years younger than she really was. It sometimes happened that when she had believed a hat to be perfect and it had been on view in her show-room, she suddenly saw, two or three days later, to her great consternation, two or three faults in it. She would then seize it impulsively, take off the trimming and re-arrange it.

She finally discovered that hats were never right until they had been criticised some time after they were finished. Is not this the touch-stone for all works of art?

The influence of clothes on human destinies is enormous. We say "it is not the cowl that makes the

monk," but that is another erroneous proverb, as it does make the monk. Its stamp always remains and moulds the individual, body and soul, in a certain way. The prestige of the costume has a great deal to do with the sacerdotal or military vocation. Who will ever know how much Mademoiselle de Montijo's dresses had to do with making an Empress of her? She ordered her dresses for Conpiègne from Worth, whose fame was just beginning and, according to her own expression, they were her "battle horse." They proved to be the horse with which she won her victory, and we all know the effects of that victory.

The death of a delightful man of my acquaintance was caused by a hat being worn on one side. One of his mother's friends wanted him to marry a pretty girl she knew who was very charming and very well off. He happened to be staying at her house near Vernon, when this young protégée was going through on her way to Rouen.

Anxious for her guest to see the girl, she persuaded him to go to the station with her. He went, saw the girl, but, alas, she had her hat on one side, in the most comical way possible. It was no doubt one of those odious hats, so badly balanced that no pin in the world could keep them straight. The harm was done though. He never dared tell his mother's friend what his objection to the girl had been. He owned it to me later on, adding: "I should always have seen her like that."

Imagination plays tricks on Frenchmen as it does on no other men. This one married another girl who wore her hats straight, but whose head was rather turned.

The marriage ended in a divorce, and the divorce in sudden death, such sudden death that it was generally believed to have been suicide.

The girl whom he would not marry little thinks what a disaster was caused by one of her hats.

The style of dress acts on the body and on the mind. One's thoughts are not the same in a frock coat as in a short coat, in a low-necked as in a high-necked dress. Bare shoulders receive and communicate a whole crowd of impressions which covered shoulders do not. And not a single pulsation nor a single vibration of the human being is lost. The fashion of dresses fastened down the back must have had incalculable consequences. I know some very droll ones myself. Clothes affect the temper and the health. When they are new and well made, they give one a sort of physical relief and make one feel kindly disposed. When one takes off clothes in which one has been working, or in which one has suffered, one feels suddenly better.

The time will come, I hope, when working men and women will have dressing-rooms and lavatories at their works, or at the places where they are employed, so that they may return home clean, refreshed and, consequently, in better humour. At present they are asking for the moon and, if they had it, they would not know what to do with it. They never ask for sanitary laws though, and yet they have every right to those.

Art had disappeared from our costumes, but it has now come back in a more subtle and refined way. Underclothes, which used to be neglected, are now more and more carefully made. This luxury extends now to the middle and lower classes. Last summer, when I was staying in the country, I noticed the clothes hanging out to dry.

There were three generations of chemises hanging out on a line, in the sunshine, in a certain meadow.

The grandmother's were of coarse, unbleached linen.

They were high-necked and threaded with tape and the sleeves were to the elbow.

Her daughter's were not so long and were slightly shaped.

The grand-daughter's, as I imagine, were sleeveless, low-necked, a pretty cut and trimmed with lace.

These three models, swelled out, were blowing about in the wind. They supplied me with illustrations of the progress accomplished and, like a true woman, I rejoiced. This reminds me of a story which is very characteristic.

A lady living in the provinces, who had never left her native village for more than a quarter of a century and who knew nothing of the evolution that had taken place in dress, or indeed of any other evolution, went one morning into her maid's room. She had known her as a child, but she had lost sight of her for some years, as the girl had been away at service in Paris.

"Adèle," exclaimed her mistress, in a dramatic tone, "I am afraid you have been going wrong."

"Madame!" said the accused girl, in a tone of protest.

"It is not with your wages that you can pay for a corset like that," remarked the good lady, her spectacles trembling with indignation, as she pointed to a corset thrown over a chair. It looked like black satin and was trimmed with lace and red ribbons and was laced with red.

"Oh, yes, Madame," answered the maid, suppressing her laughter with great difficulty. "That corset only cost eight francs at the Louvre. It is made of sateen and very strong, as Madame can see."

"Was that all?" said the good lady, examining the corset with a distrustful, severe look. "Ah, the wea-

pons of the evil one are very cheap at present. It is no wonder that there is such decadence in France."

Whereupon she threw the innocent corset down again on a chair back.

Although the art of dress has made great progress, we do not yet know how to dress sensibly. Our clothes do not allow our skin to breathe, and the weight of our garments is too much for our shoulders. The fatigue that they cause affects our temper and makes us less active than we should otherwise be, so that our strength is used up in this way instead of being employed in speed. The ideal clothing would be that which contributed to the beauty, grace and health of body and soul. In order to obtain this, Providence will have to employ scientific men, artists and poets. We shall have it in due time.

One day, at a reception, the conversation turned on a certain woman whose dresses were generally extremely ugly, and sometimes quite ridiculous.

"The dear creature!" exclaimed a New York woman, laughing. "There must be women like her to buy up all the horrors and wear all the misfits, as, if it were not for them, the work-girls would have no practice and could not try experiments, so that I should never get a pretty hat like this one." As she said this, she glanced at herself very complacently in a looking glass.

This intuitive philosophy, peculiar to Americans, always amuses me. It enables them to find the most astonishingly correct arguments sometimes, and this certainly was one. It is after numberless experiments from the time of the most primitive kind or ornaments, that we have now arrived at Lalique's jewellery. Perfect master-pieces of human art are to be seen in that

window in the Place Vendôme, which we all approach with a certain respect.

It would be interesting if the great artist would show us, side by side with his works, a few specimens of the models of his Soudanese brother artists, so that we might see the progress at which we have arrived.

If we could study them together, in this way, I am sure we should find many designs and features common to both of them, for, in the chain formed by the clothing and the ornaments of man, there is no gap, and it is the Eternal God who holds in His hand the beginning and the end of it.

#### *Paris.*

Since the evening when I dined at the Rue Chanaelles, the old year has passed away, a month of the new one has gone, and the time has seemed to me no longer than a single day of yore. I have often wondered how it is that life seems to pass so slowly during our childhood and youth, and so rapidly later on. Perhaps it is that the more the brain is filled with pictures, impressions and memories, the more busy it is and it is then less conscious of time.

The Aurannes have started on their Italian journey.

Before leaving with them, Maïa came to say good-bye to me.

I took care to show her the portrait of the dog and cat, Joe and Manon, appearing, of course, to ignore the fact that M. de Couzan's portrait was on the same card. I pointed out to her the way in which the photograph had caught the beam of affection between the animals and their master. A wave of emotion softened the expression of her face, for a moment, the corners of her

lips twitched, and then, with very well-feigned indifference, she laid the photograph down on the table.

During the whole of her visit, I noticed the irresistible attraction that it exercised over her. She tried not to look at it, but her eyes kept returning to it and her long, light eyelashes blinked, in spite of her efforts.

All this was extremely interesting to me. I told her, and proved to her as well as I could, that M. de Couzan was not, at present, in love with any woman, either light, dark or red-haired.

"Anyhow"—she began.

"Let me explain something to you," I said. "The English have lately begun to publish novels which are just as improper as ours and much more coarse. This is an evolution. In one of these novels, an adventure between an Englishman and a queen is described. The adventure lasts three weeks. These three weeks have become quite celebrated and are the dream of certain good looking young men. Monsieur de Couzan has evidently had his three weeks, but that is all."

A gleam lighted up the pupils of my young friend's eyes and she tried to smile.

"Do not try to excuse him, Granny," she said, "he is absolutely free,—and so am I," she added, with a sort of childish bravado, that was very feminine.

From Rome, I only received a few affectionate, but rather sad, little letters from Maïa. Her letter from Monte Carlo yesterday was four pages long. It was a very bright, gay, lively epistle. On the last page was the following postscript:

"Your friend is here. He has dined twice at Ciro's, at the next table to ours. He was alone, and he and

d'Auranne just bowed to each other. Kate naturally discovered that he was there and, when once she had found him, I thought she would devour him with her big, blue eyes.

"‘But he looks so nice, he is a splendid man,’ she keeps repeating to me. I did not give her any explanation, as she would never have understood. It is rather comic, though, is it not?’

All this was in the postscript of the letter. As for M. de Couzan, he had been kept longer than he expected in Roumania. From Bucharest, he went to Vienna in connection with his business affairs. He wrote to me from there that he was going to Monte Carlo to see the working of the automobile boats. I wonder whether my proud Savoyard has not gone a few steps out of his way, in spite of what he says, in search of happiness?

#### *Paris.*

A conversation I had with Madame Lasserre, this afternoon, has made a great impression on me. It seemed to me that, for just a second, I held a soul in my hands and that it was throbbing like a bird's heart.

Ever since my stay at Mortin, Maïa's parents have taken the most affectionate interest in me. Dr. Henri and his brother have both found time to come and call on me, and Madame Lasserre has been several times.

She and I have always discussed subjects of no importance, as we have both felt that beyond a certain point we had not the same ideas. We have, therefore, by tacit consent, always avoided going beyond that point.

We have, of course, always talked about Maïa, and

I have guessed that the mother is getting more and more anxious about her daughter. Her beautiful, dark eyes have met mine sometimes full of mute questions which she did not dare put into words.

To-day, I saw that she was more anxious and worried than usual. After exchanging a few commonplace remarks, she suddenly said:

"Madame de Coulevain, I want to ask you something."

"Ask anything you like," I said, smiling.

"Do you think that Maïa has any trouble, or any worry of any kind?"

"What makes you think she has?" I asked.

"Well, her liveliness does not seem natural. It seems to me that she is trying to make herself forget something. She forsakes her home and is always travelling about. I am very much afraid she will start for Japan with the Aurannes."

"Oh, no," I answered, promptly, "there is no question of that. I think she is really as happy as circumstances allow her to be, but, as time goes on, she realises more and more that she has given up the good things of life and that she has grieved you all, and I feel sure, at times, her regret is very keen."

"Oh, there is something else, I am sure," murmured Madame Lasserre. "What moral ruin and disaster that abominable divorce law brings about. You do not approve of it, I hope?"

The tone in which she asked this question was almost aggressive.

"I think it is a very necessary and very humane law," I replied, firmly.

"The divorce law necessary and humane!" she exclaimed. "Oh, how can you say that?"

I felt that my visitor was getting far away from me morally.

"Yes. You will admit that a good, straightforward man may be united to a woman who is unworthy of him?"

"Alas, yes —"

"And that a noble-minded, intelligent, loving woman may be united to an imbecile, to a cruel brute with no morality at all —"

"Yes, that happens, too, certainly."

"And you would like honesty and dishonesty, virtue and vice, cleanliness and dirt to be united indissolubly? It would be simply barbarous."

Madame Lasserre flinched, in spite of herself, and she looked away from me.

"Then, too," I said, "there may be secret antipathies between individuals, an incompatibility of character and of epidermis, physical and moral dislikes, the origin and nature of which we do not know. Would it not be cruel to shut such adverse forces up together in the narrow space allowed by the human nest?"

"Separation is allowed for such cases as that."

"Separation is dangerous for the community at large. It makes masculine and feminine drones, and these creep into other homes and disorganise them. Then, too, it creates a false situation, which is often more painful than divorce."

"Our great grandmothers did not divorce and they were not any more unhappy than women of the present day."

"We do not know that! Then, too, the conditions of life have changed since then. Woman then had no individuality. She was subject to her husband like the Oriental woman. She is now learning to know herself,

her faculties are being developed, she is gradually becoming emancipated. This evolution creates elements of revolt and of discord, of course. Divorces are more frequent in countries where the women are more cultivated. But all that will find its own level in time, things will become more harmonious. We must have patience —”

“ You do not speak of the sad lot of children whose parents are divorced —”

“ Children whose parents are divorced are less to be pitied than children whose parents do not get on well together. The latter live in a veritable hell on earth. The poor children do not know who is in the right and who is in the wrong. Their judgment is warped by all that they hear. I have seen poor little childish faces beam with pleasure on hearing that their father was going away from home. One of my friends was married to a man absolutely unworthy of her. He was coarse, weak, and a gambler into the bargain. At meal-times he quarrelled on the slightest pretext. Their little girl, who was only five years old, was extremely sensitive and nervous. She was generally terrified at the scenes between her parents. One day, though, worked up to a pitch, she sat straight up on her tall chair and, leaning forward, said to her father: ‘I will not ‘low you to speak like that to my mamma!’ Just think of the injustice the child must have felt, before she, with her timid nature, was roused in this way.”

“ It is frightful to think of such a thing.”

“ Yes, indeed, and my friend was obliged to get a divorce in the end. She is now married to a delightful man who is a good father to the little girl and theirs is one of the happiest homes I know. I could give you a hundred instances of that kind.

"When a man marries his mistress, though," I continued, "there is no happiness in that home. It is not divorce that should be done away with, but the causes that lead to the divorce. A more intelligent education should be given to young people. They should be taught more truly what life is. Three quarters of the people who marry have no idea of the responsibilities they are accepting. When a woman wants to obtain a divorce, people talk to her about the sacredness of the home. It is before marriage that a woman should be impressed with this. Her parents ought to have thought a little about that. According to my way of thinking, every nation that is sufficiently civilised should have the divorce law. It is a weapon, and a sword that cuts. Good people will only make use of it in a case of extreme necessity, as a legitimate defense. Bad people will make an evil use of it, just as criminals make an evil use of the revolver. If you will only reflect," I said in conclusion, "you will see that there is wisdom and justice in the divorce law."

"It is not for me either to reflect or to argue. The Church does not sanction divorce and I do not acknowledge any other law than that of the Church."

She said this in a firm tone, holding her head very erect. I knew that I had a rigid believer to deal with and, for the sake of studying her better, I tried to drive her into a corner with my reasoning.

"The Church does not sanction divorce, but it sometimes annuls a marriage, even when there are children."

"When it does that, it has very good reasons. Jesus reproves the idea of divorce distinctly in the Gospel."

"Except in case of adultery," I said. "He repeats the words of Moses to the Pharisees: 'He which made them at the beginning made them male and female. For

this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they twain shall be one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

" You see," said Madame Lasserre, with an accent of triumph. " Ah, I have read those words of Jesus over and over again, they have penetrated to my very heart."

" But all that is only a poetical and Oriental idea," I said, " an outcome of the story of the creation of Eve. How could the human atom separate what God had joined together? And then how could a husband and wife having no affinity ever become one flesh? Just think it over for a moment — Ah," I added, " it is true you feel that you have no right to think such things over? "

I smiled as I said this and the irony of my words made my companion's lips twitch slightly.

" It would be very fine if husband and wife could live according to the English formula: ' For richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do them part.' That ideal cannot be attained by everyone. When the laws of a country authorise divorce, it becomes an affair of individual conscience. Your conscience would forbid it, I am sure, Madame Lasserre, but Maïa's would certainly allow it."

The mind which I was studying contracted with pain.

" I hope her conscience will not go any further than that."

" Her conscience would allow her to marry again, but, even at the price of her happiness, I feel sure she would be prevented by the fear of causing you more sorrow."

The soul I was watching throbbed faster still, but I continued mercilessly:

"I know you well enough, though, to be quite sure that you would never accept such a sacrifice. Suppose that she should love someone else —"

The beautiful, dark eyes dilated with fear as I said this.

"If she should be able to make a home for herself, once more, and to create a family, you would be the first one to encourage her —"

The soul I was watching simply leaped with indignation.

"You think that I would advise my daughter to commit adultery!" exclaimed Madame Lasserre. "Ah, no, you little know me. I would rather see her suffer, even if it killed me."

The mother's voice broke as she uttered these words, and the tears welled up in her eyes and rolled slowly down her cheeks without her even thinking of drying them. The soul of the religious woman, heroic, sincere and unchangeable, lay there bare before me. I paid my tribute of admiration to it and then, seized with remorse at the grief I was causing needlessly, I laid my hand on that of my visitor and said quietly:

"You would not refuse your consent to Maïa's marriage with Pierre de Couzan, would you?"

A wave of emotion coloured Madame Lasserre's face and she seemed bewildered for a second. The transition was certainly a very brusque one.

"Why do you ask me that?" she said.

"I have my reasons," I answered.

"What probability is there of such a thing?" she insisted.

"Would you ever forgive me if I held out a hope to you that was never realised?"

"Ah, yes; tell me, please."

" Well, for the last two years I have seen a great deal of Monsieur de Couzan."

" Ah, I was not aware of that."

This was said with a shade of coldness and estrangement. I then explained things to her and did not hide from her the fact that I had the greatest esteem and friendship for her ex-son-in-law. I then confided to her my impressions and my observations and all that made me hope for a reconciliation between the divorced husband and wife. I described the meeting at Évian and, without any disloyalty to my young friend, I gave her mother an idea of Maïa's present state of mind.

Poor Madame Lasserre listened to me and questioned me eagerly and, whilst I talked to her, her face betrayed a whole succession of sentiments and emotions.

" Maïa and Monsieur de Couzan are perhaps nearer to each other than they think," I added, smiling.

" Ah, I have prayed so much and God is so good."

She then got up to take her leave. She seized both my hands in hers and clasped them warmly and, in her joy, kissed me with an expression of affectionate compassion in her eyes.

" What a pity that you are not a believer!" she said regretfully.

I expected a remark of that kind, for, to a Catholic believer, no other faith holds good.

### *Paris.*

Maïa sent me a beautiful bouquet of lilac and roses, by way of letting me know that she had returned. Towards three o'clock, she literally burst into my room and, putting her arms round me, kissed me affectionately.

"Granny," she said, after asking after my health, "I have just had an adventure."

"I am not at all surprised," I remarked, "you are quite pretty enough to-day to attract attention."

Her eyes were brighter than usual, her complexion most brilliant and her lips a rich colour.

She threw herself down in an arm-chair.

"Let me tell you what has just happened — no, it is too droll, most comic —"

She stopped short, as though seized with a sudden shyness.

"Well, tell me," I urged.

"You will laugh —"

"I hope I shall."

"Well, I came with Father in the automobile. I asked him to put me down at the corner of the Rue de Rivoli, as I wanted to walk from there and look at the shops. I always want to see them again after any absence from Paris. I walked along under the arcades and there were a great many people. There was a wretched looking old man, with the most miserable face and the poorest clothes, in front of the Continental Hotel. I had seen him from a little distance, for he was standing reading the *menu* that is posted up at the door. Can you imagine anything more pathetic than this poor half-starved creature reading the list of dishes that other people were to eat? I took a coin out of my purse and was just going to put it into the poor fellow's hand, when I found myself face to face with a handsome young man who had suddenly turned back to do the same thing. Our hands positively met —"

"And what happened?"

"We looked at each other and smiled, and I fancy

we both coloured slightly. He raised his hat and then went on his way. I went on, too, and lost sight of him at the corner of the Rue de Castiglione. That is all, but is it not the beginning of a romance for you, Granny?"

"The end of one, you mean," I said, gaily, "for I fancy the handsome young man was no other than Pierre de Couzan?"

"Ah, you guessed too quickly. I told it badly."

"Your expression betrayed you."

"I meant to alarm you, as you are always so afraid of handsome young men for me."

"I used to be, but I am not now, thank Heaven."

"Really," exclaimed Maïa, with one of her low, well modulated laughs.

"Quite true," I answered. "I suppose you have been flirting a little with the said young man at Monte Carlo?"

"Flirting a long way off, at any rate. I only saw him at the restaurant and at the Casino."

"Did he gamble?"

"No, but he used to watch me gamble and he looked delighted when I lost. Men are a bad lot!"

It would be impossible to give an idea of the droll way in which Maïa said this.

"He told me that it amused him to watch you trying various systems for roulette."

"My systems are not to be despised, for I won about a thousand francs."

"You were lucky. It is very odd, Monte Carlo seems to have done Monsieur de Couzan as much good as it has done you," I added, speaking seriously. "He is very, very busy, but he is lively and gay and very fit."

"So much the better," answered Maïa, with an affectation of utter indifference.

"I am dining with him next week."

"Ah."

In the depths of the blue pupils of her eyes, I caught a gleam, which I was sure was one of longing and regret.

"Do you know," I continued, "when I think of you two, and I often do think of you, I have a wild desire to take hold of each of you by the back of the neck, as we do obstinate little terriers, and shake you. The shaking might stir you up and then clear away your vanity and pride, perhaps."

"Thank you, Granny."

"Oh, I shall do it some day."

The drawing up of the head and the tightening of the lips that this threat brought about warned me that it would be wiser to change the subject.

"In the meantime," I said, "tell me how the Aurrannes are getting on?"

"Well, I saw them off at Marseilles, and was very, very sorry to lose them. They are such true friends and are so delightful. They told me to remember them to you and not to allow you to forget them."

"No, I shall not forget them. Now tell me about your Italian journey."

"Oh, not to-day," she said, getting up. "I have an engagement and must hurry away. Can you come and dine with me to-morrow evening?"

"Yes."

"Very well, then. I will come and call for you about seven o'clock and we will have a nice long evening together. I will tell you about my impressions — and I had some very curious ones."

Just as Maïa was going out, she turned round and

said: "Granny, try not to have any more horrible ideas like the one you owned to just now. It must be a touch of neurasthenia. Try to get cured." She laughed as she said this, and threw me a kiss.

*Paris.*

"I will bring you happiness," I said the other day, impulsively, to Pierre de Couzan, and now I have really taken it to him, but in the strangest way imaginable.

Towards five o'clock, yesterday evening, Maïa knocked violently at my door and then walked in. She had not sent her name up, as she usually does, and her face was so changed that I rose instinctively, feeling that something was the matter.

"What is it?" I asked.

She held out an evening edition of a newspaper to me, pointing to a certain paragraph.

"Read it," she said in a feeble voice.

I took the paper from her and read the following lines:

**"' SERIOUS BALLOON ACCIDENT.' "**

"'The balloon O. in charge of Pilot K.—  
"has met with a serious disaster near Char-  
"tres. Baron de Couzan and Comte Vivier  
"were the passengers. The former is very  
"seriously injured and the latter has a frac-  
"tured leg. The pilot is only slightly  
"bruised.'

*Very seriously injured.* Those words seemed to have gripped my heart like a vice.

"Who gave you this paper?" I asked, by way of giving myself time to recover.

"The concierge had brought it up to Jenny and

when I came in I found her in tears. I read it and — I came at once here. *Granny —*"

Maïa's eyes were so full of grief and anguish that I tried to comfort her.

"It is very probable that the information is wrong. Let us go at once and find out."

"Oh, yes, let us go,— I can wait for you at the door —"

In a very few minutes we were on our way to Rue Chanaleilles. We did not speak a word. The dread of a tragic ending had taken possession of me. How many times I had seen the cup of happiness offered to the human lips and then roughly snatched away. I pictured to myself the beautiful flat empty and my young friend a widow for ever. I thought, too, of poor Joe and Manon without their master.

When we reached the house, Maïa did not wait for me at the door, as she had proposed. Urged on by the irresistible force which was governing her completely, she followed me up the stairs. In the court-yard, I saw the concierge and a group of servants talking together, and this only increased my anxiety.

We went on up. Maïa was paler and paler. All at once she stopped short and grasped the rail of the bannisters.

"*Granny,*" she said, with dry lips in a stifled voice, "*suppose he is dead?*"

"Oh, that is impossible," I said, with an assurance I did not feel at all.

When we reached his landing, we stopped short for a second, breathless from the quick beating of our hearts. We did not dare to utter a word. I rang and there was no answer. Maïa, who was almost fainting, leaned against the wall for support. I rang again and this

time the door was opened almost immediately — by Pierre de Couzan. He had a coat thrown over his shoulders and his left arm was in a sling.

We all three stood still for a few seconds, motionless with surprise, emotion and the sudden change from mortal anguish to sudden peace. Our poor human machines required a little time to recover voice and movement.

"A broken arm," I exclaimed at last. "Ah, it is only that, thank God."

The Baron's pale face beamed with joy.

"How good of you both to have come at once like this," he said. "Please come in," he continued.

We entered and he took my hand in his and raised it to his lips. Maia then held out hers courageously. He grasped it and, after kissing it, drew it through his arm.

"I shall keep it now," he said with tender authority and a happy smile.

He took us into his study, gave us chairs and drew one up for himself near Maia's arm-chair.

"Does it give you much pain?" she asked, in the most adorable, shy way.

"No, I assure you it does not just at this moment," he answered.

"What sort of an accident was it?" I asked.

"An accident such as has never happened; it was quite unique. We started from St. Cloud park with the wind in our favour, this morning, and we went along wonderfully. As we were between 150 and 200 metres high, the pilot pulled the cord to let out some air. The valve did not work and he pulled a little harder. The other rope had caught in this one and our balloon tore.

" 'It's all up with us!' said the pilot, and the balloon began to descend at an alarming rate, so that we felt sure of being smashed up. Our last hour had not evidently arrived, for, instead of coming down on anything dangerous, we landed in the middle of a field all soaked with the rain of the last few days. When we saw ourselves on earth once more and all of us alive, we laughed. My poor friend's leg is broken, though, and my arm is fractured. The pilot only had some bad bruises. People came to the rescue and we were able to get back to Paris. As soon as I saw the newspapers with their exaggerated account, I sent my man off with a few telegrams and explanations. As I had not intended dining at home to-night, his wife had gone to see some of her friends at 'Auteuil, so he has now started off to fetch her back. That is how it is that you found me alone and that I had the good luck to open the door to you."

Whilst he was telling us all this, I had seen wave after wave of the most exalted emotion reflected on Maïa's face. Thanks to the intensity of life created by the situation, her eyes were now the colour of amethysts. She was gazing at her husband with a mixture of passionate tenderness, shyness and astonishment. I felt sure that she was saying to herself for the thousandth time: "How could I have been so abominable?"

"Did you think of anything during that terrible fall?" I asked our host.

"Yes," he replied, "the blood rushed to my brain, and I thought of my mother . . . and I also saw Maïa at home, seated at her dressing table."

"Do you believe that, Granny?" she asked, with a radiant smile.

"Certainly I do," I answered.

"And so do you," said her husband, pressing her hand, as it lay on the arm of her chair.

"I am quite capable of believing it," remarked Maïa. Her joyful, mocking tone proved to me that she was now herself again.

Just at this moment, she noticed an expression of sudden pain on M. de Couzan's face.

"Pierre," she said, getting up, "I am sure you are suffering atrociously. Did you send for a surgeon?"

"Yes, but he was away and he will not come now until to-morrow morning. With cold water compresses I shall be all right till then."

"Oh, no, you must have your arm set at once. Let me call up Uncle. He will be at home at this hour and he will bring someone. It will be good to hear his surprise, too. May I telephone?"

"You may do anything you like."

He gave Maïa a chair at his writing table and asked for the number for her.

"There you are," he said, kissing the hand that took the receiver from him.

"*Hallo, hallo, Dr. Lasserre?*"

"He is there, luckily," she said, turning to us.

"*Is that you, Uncle?*"

"*Well, prepare for a shock—*"

"*Yes, an agreeable shock—*"

"*Ah, you think my voice sounds gay? What ears you have!*"

"*Are you ready for the shock?*"

Maïa gave a low laugh.

"Well, guess where I am?"

"You cannot guess?"

"I am at Monsieur de Couzan's."

"A miracle — yes. He has been in a balloon accident and was said to have been brought home seriously injured. Pierre de Coulevain and I came to ask after him. He has only a broken arm — Bring a surgeon at once — Rue de Chanaleilles.

"Thanks — You are the best Uncle God ever made —"

Maïa then turned round towards us, her face a bright colour from the effect of the words we had not heard.

"May I telephone to Jenny, now?" she asked. "I am afraid of finding her drowned in her own tears. I will tell her to come here. She may be useful and she will be so happy to come."

"Poor Jenny," said the Baron, with a kind accent in his voice. "Yes, let her come by all means."

I was just trying to find a pretext for escaping and leaving the husband and wife to finish their reconciliation by themselves. Maïa supplied me with it unconsciously.

"Father is at his Club," she said. "I should not like to telephone anything so private and so — astounding to him there." She laughed and blushed at the same time. "As to Mother," she continued, "the surprise will be too much for her, perhaps —"

"Well, let me go and break the good news," I said,

getting up promptly. "Madame Lasserre and I had a little conversation the other day, which may have prepared her mind a little. I should be so happy to see her joy," I continued.

"Well, then, go, Granny, dear," said Maïa. "I should like to know which of you two is rejoicing the most now, the novelist or the friend?"

"I really do not know," I answered, frankly.

Just as I was going away, I said to M. de Couzan:

"I am afraid the setting will give you pain, but I hope you will have a good night afterwards. Maïa," I added, "telephone to me, as soon as it is set, and tell me whether it is all right and then come and see me, if you can, before returning to Rue Vernet."

"Very well," she answered.

They came to the door with me arm in arm and, if I am not very much mistaken, their kiss of reconciliation must have been one of the purest and most beautiful kisses that human lips ever exchanged.

When I arrived at Madame Lasserre's, I was still very much affected.

"How fortunate that I came in early," she said. "I should have been so sorry to have missed one of your rare visits."

"And I should have been sorry to have missed it, too," I said. "Have you seen the evening papers?" I continued.

"The evening papers. I do not even have time to read the morning ones. Why do you ask me that?"

"They all say that Monsieur de Couzan has been seriously injured in a balloon accident."

"I hope it is not true."

"Well, there has been a balloon accident, which might have been fatal, but he has escaped with a broken arm,

and fortunately the left one. I have just seen him, and it might certainly have been much worse."

"Who is with him?"

"A woman," I answered, putting on a mysterious manner.

Madame Lasserre raised her eyebrows and looked at me with a gleam of intuition in her eyes.

"What woman?" she asked.

"His wife," I answered, smiling.

My companion turned very pale and her lips moved to speak.

"Maïa—" she said at last, in a stifled voice, "at Monsieur de Couzan's?"

"Yes, I went with her and left her there."

I then told her all that had happened and, as I spoke, the pious woman clasped her hands together, as though offering up her thanksgiving.

"How good God is to me," she said, with her eyes full of tears.

At this moment M. Lasserre suddenly arrived, his face beaming with satisfaction.

"Ah," I exclaimed, "I am sure you know the news."

"Yes, I am perfectly astounded and bewildered. On arriving at my Club, I heard of Couzan's accident. I telephoned at once to Rue Chanaleilles and it was my daughter who answered. What do you think of that, Isabelle?"

"I think there are still miracles."

M. Lasserre was in a very excited state of mind. He began to walk up and down the room.

"Poor child, she has wanted a reconciliation for a long time."

"For a long time?" exclaimed his wife.

"Why, yes." M. Lasserre stood still in front of his

wife. "I am glad to have been more perspicacious than you, for once, in a matter of sentiment. She was in love with her husband and she wanted to be back with him. Henri was sure of this, too, and we were both heart-broken over the whole affair. Ah, Pierre de Coulevain, do not ever have any children."

"No, you are quite right in giving me that advice. I never will, upon any account."

We both laughed heartily.

"It is very evident that Maïa is your daughter," said Madame Lasserre, by way of conclusion.

The banker laid his hand on his wife's shoulder and patted her affectionately.

"I never doubted that for a moment, my dear," he said.

A blush came to Madame Lasserre's face, in spite of her halo of white hair.

"And now put your bonnet on," continued this terrible husband, "and we will take Pierre de Coulevain home and then go and see what is happening at Rue Chanaleilles."

\* \* \* \* \*

Towards half past ten, Maïa arrived at my hotel. Her face was pale and drawn, but her eyes were luminous with happiness.

"And that husband of yours, how is he?" I asked promptly.

"Quite comfortable."

"Is the arm set?"

"Yes, but it was terrible—" she answered, sitting down on the edge of my sofa. "I stayed in the room," she added.

"Oh, Maïa, why?"

"I wanted to suffer with him, Granny, and I can tell you I did suffer, too. The dose of chloroform was not strong enough. He cried out three times and each time it went through me. Ah, we certainly are the same flesh, he and I. When he came to himself, he was very much surprised to see his arm in plaster. He had been dreaming that two men had been tearing it to pieces. He is all right now and I have left him asleep. Uncle was an angel, Granny, and Father and Mother have all been perfect, but," she added, with a smile, "Mother will never understand."

"I shall go and see Monsieur de Couzan to-morrow," I said.

"We are both invited to dine with him to-morrow, and you can chaperone me," she added, blushing.

"Willingly," I answered.

"Thank you," she said, getting up to go. She took my hand in hers, kissed it and then pressed it to her cheek.

"I am sure you are sorry to see your romance coming to an end?" she said.

"Yes," I said, "but you might continue it. Try to add a few beautiful chapters to it."

"We will try," she answered.

"The gods undertook to do the 'shaking' of you both. It was just what you needed, I could see that. The gods did it in a most merciful way."

"That is true; oh, that is very true."

I went with my visitor to the door.

"Joe and Manon are adorable," she said. "Joe knows that his master is suffering and he will not budge from his side. How do you suppose Pick and he will get on?"

"Perfectly well. And then, too, if they do not, you

must shake them. I believe in the efficacy of the means I recommend."

"And so do I," replied Maïa, laughing.

*Paris.*

Spring, for which I have been longing, is waiting for me on the banks of Lake Leman, with its fresh verdure, its divine songs and all the beautiful mysteries of its new birth. In spite of all this, I am lingering on here. For the last three weeks, I have been chaperoning my young friend and this has given me an opportunity to watch Nature at work in bringing together again this couple who had been separated by adverse forces. I have been perfectly fascinated by all I have seen.

The day after the accident, Maïa and I dined at the Rue Chanaleilles. This was a special favour granted to the invalid. Our host placed my young friend to the right of him, instead of at the other end of the table, and I appreciated this tact. She was wearing a white dress and a string of pearls round her neck. The dress was extremely simple, but it was a master-piece of the dressmaker's art. Maïa was struggling in vain with her emotion during the whole of the meal. Her cheeks kept changing colour, her eyelashes quivered and her voice trembled several times. The conversation never flagged, though; it was gay and animated all the time and was punctuated by happy smiles and glances.

After dinner, we went back to our host's study. I saw Maïa's eyes glancing curiously round the large room. She was longing to come into closer contact with all these objects which belonged to the every-day existence of her husband. I spoke of the "ancestor's" portrait and she at once got up and went across the room to admire. Feeling a little bolder, she then looked

at the other pictures, sat down at the writing table, picked up the paper knife, the large scissors, the pens and the pencils. All these accessories of silver, ivory or tortoise-shell kept something of their radio-activity and it was probably this that made her like to handle them. Pierre de Couzan was talking to me, but his eyes were irresistibly attracted by Maïa and there was a grave, tender and astonished look in them as they rested on her.

"Who would have thought that I should ever see her here?" he said to me in a low voice.

"Did I not promise you to bring you happiness?" I said.

"Yes, and you have brought it," he answered. "I shall not thank you, as there are certain things that are above and beyond all words —"

"What is above and beyond all words?" asked Maïa, who had overheard the end of the sentence on her way back to us.

"The joy of finding someone again who is very dear and who seemed to be lost for ever," answered M. de Couzan, gravely.

"That is true, oh, very true," exclaimed Maïa, with an accent which proved that she was experiencing the same joy.

There were many incidents connected with the binding together again of these two lives, which were both amusing and touching. The divorce ring was sold and the money given to an orphan. A wonderful ring of Lalique's took the place of it.

I asked Maïa, one day, whether she and M. de Couzan would be willing to omit the civil marriage, if it were not legally necessary.

"Oh, no," she answered, unhesitatingly. "We had

the Church's blessing and that has never been taken back, I suppose, but it was the civil law that made our marriage legitimate. It was the civil law that separated us and it alone can make us husband and wife again. Oh, we are quite honest and straightforward, you know, Granny," she added, drolly.

"I am sure of that. It is just what makes you so delightful."

"And would you believe it, we had both kept our wedding-rings. Mine was in its little white velvet box and his at the bottom of his jewellery case. I am surprised he had not thrown it into the fire," she added, with a little flash of anger with herself.

As a matter of fact, they have adopted the attitude of *fiancés* at present and with such dignity and sincerity that they have saved the situation. There is nothing ridiculous about them, and this cannot generally be said when a divorced husband and wife decide to marry again. When Pierre de Couzan dines at Rue Vernet, Maïa goes out into the hall to meet him and comes into the drawing-room with him, leaning on his arm. At table, she cuts his meat and looks after the one-armed man in a quiet, charming manner. All that makes him feel the divine maternity of love and I am delighted at this. In love, it seems to me that just the right note must be found, the note that can be kept always, and my ear tells me that these two have found it. An engagement between a married couple must have a rare charm. At times I see a shadow on Maïa's face and I know what causes it. There will always be a cloud in her conjugal sky, no matter how blue it may be.

"Granny," she exclaimed suddenly, one day, "who do you suppose arranged that abominable meeting at the Hôtel B——?"

"Providence," I answered, "the gods who order our movements. That was a shock which you had to have and it was to contribute towards your present happiness."

"I shall never be able to forget the words I overheard."

"No, I am sure you will never forget them. That is the tribute you are called upon to pay to bad luck. But now you know that it is in your power to make your husband happier than any other woman could. That surely ought to suffice."

"Happier than any other woman could! Ah, God grant that it may be as you say," she added, with the most pathetic fervour.

Every day now, the young couple go over again together some part of the path along which they have walked separately during the years of their isolation. Every day, in this way, some threads of their life are joined together again. Maïa is passionately interested in her husband's work.

At her request, he took us to the factory at D——. He showed us, with very natural pride, the human and mechanical forces that have been set in motion there, the wonderful machinery, all the arrangements of which bear witness to an intelligent care for the health of the work-people, the bath rooms and the refectory where they can warm their food and have their meals comfortably.

Maïa was enthusiastic and she glanced at her husband with admiration, proud to think that he was one of the guiding spirits of this immense enterprise. I shall be very much surprised if the wives and families of the workmen do not make the acquaintance of the master's wife.

It is delightful to see the satisfaction of M. Lasserre and of Dr. Henri. The banker strolls up and down the little garden of the Rue Vernet, arm in arm with his son-in-law, and is probably charmed to be able to discuss his business affairs with him. Madame Lasserre still bears the young man a certain grudge. This ending, for which it had required an immense effort of her faith to hope, was now for her a kind of religious triumph, and Heaven only knows what rich offering she has given to her Church in token of her gratitude. She gazes at her daughter with an astonishment that is almost comic. She no doubt wonders where this love has come from that she now sees lighting up Maïa's face. This is part of the miracle to her. Madame de Couzan has come to Paris, by way of sanctioning the reconciliation, and I dined with her the other evening at Rue Vernet. She amused and interested me. On taking her place at table, she made the sign of the cross in a manner that was almost aggressive by the marked way in which it was done. She murmured a blessing and then unfolded her serviette brusquely, and pinned it on to her dress, with two little black-headed pins, hidden in the folds of her lace for that purpose. Her thin, dark face above the white serviette, and her keen, dark eyes had the combative expression of the militant devotee, of the pious person who is always saying: "If I were the Pope —"

After dinner, Maïa said to me in an undertone: "Who would ever have thought that I should be glad to see the black-headed pins again of *Madame la Mère*. They used to get on my nerves!"

The pretty house in the Rue Vernet is to be let and the young couple are to live at Rue Chanaleilles. They are to have the first floor as well as the other one. With

a staircase between the two storeys, inside the flat, they will have plenty of room. They spend their evenings poring over architects' plans. They are like two birds busy building their nest again. All this is most charming and touching to watch.

I am leaving to-morrow and there was a little farewell dinner in my honour at Maïa's, with Dr. Henri and M. de Couzan as guests. The dinner and the whole evening afterwards were delightful. When I got up to take my leave, Maïa said in a very serious tone:

"Granny, Pierre and I have decided to adopt you."

"To adopt a grandmother," I exclaimed, laughing. "Well, that is an uncommon idea, certainly."

"We shall be sure, at any rate, that you will not turn out badly."

"Impudent girl," I said. "And do you think I can be sure of the good conduct of my adopted children?"

"Oh, we are quite cured now, warranted to go right," answered Pierre de Couzan, twisting his moustache. "We went wrong once, but we shall never go wrong again. The result was not so very pleasant, I can assure you."

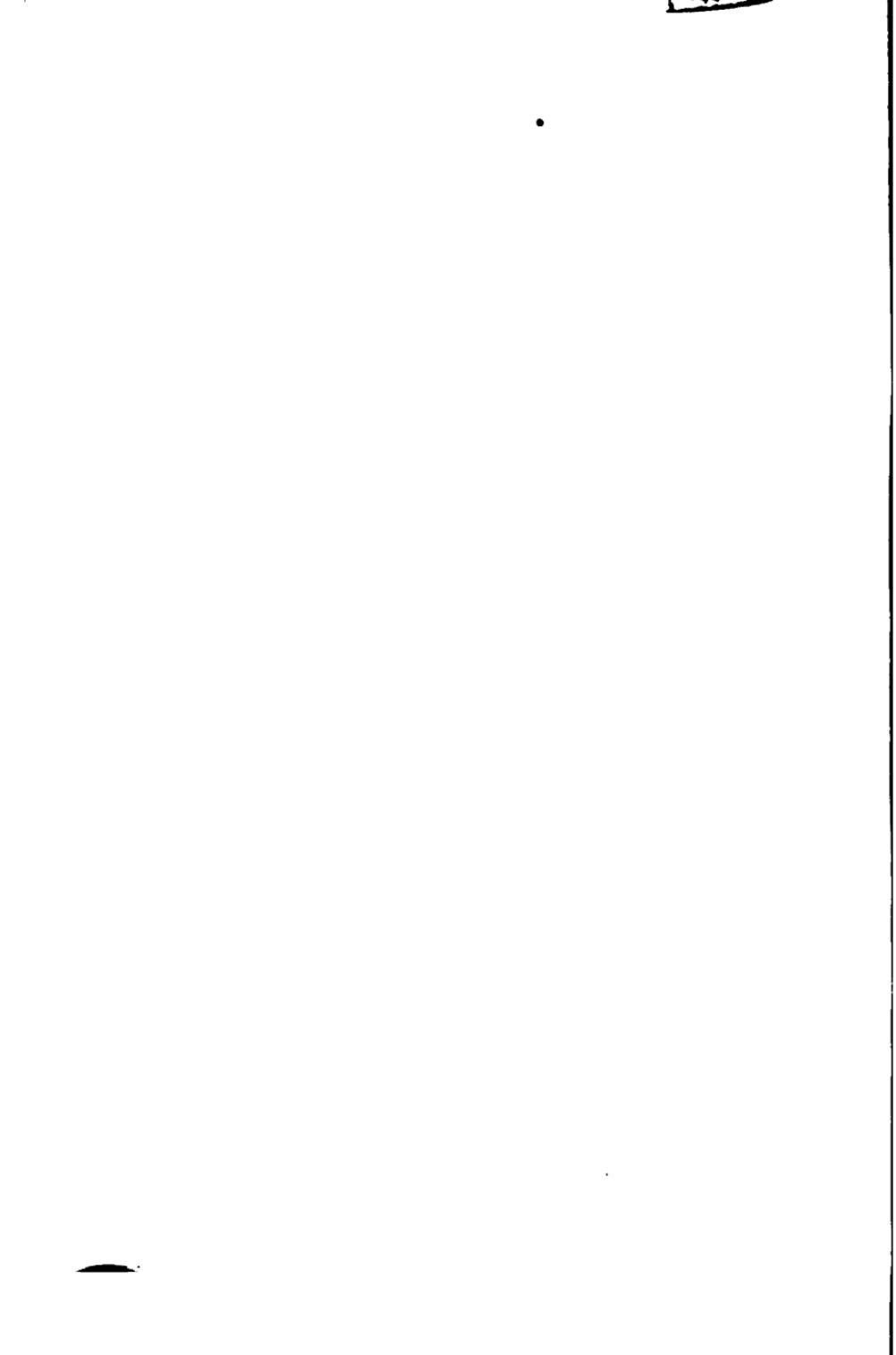
"It was horrible," put in Maïa, emphatically. "And, Granny, we can adopt you without putting anyone's nose out of joint, for there are no grandmothers in the family."

"You can make some," said Dr. Henri, with his customary bluntness.

• • • • •  
Ah, yes, I am sure there will be grandmothers in the family. . . .

**VI**

**TERRITET**



## VI

### *Territet.*

I am once more by Lake Leman and I am staying at Territet, by way of being nearer to the lake and feeling its beauty more intensely. As I have already said, my idea was to come and ask for a glimpse of its soul in the springtime, and this it gives me from morning to night. Its soul is ever blue, light and smiling, its passions do not last long, they are brusque storms that are quickly over.

Nature, with just a few strokes, creates some forms of beauty that are imposing, sublime and terrifying, but it also delights in fashioning delicate, refined and intense beauty as well. Lake Leman is one of Nature's jewels. In order to make this particular jewel, an endless number of glaciers were needed. I have been told that two hundred and fifty were necessary. There had to be a river too, and admirably cut mountain chains with bold peaks and green slopes.

As regards colouring, there is blue sky, the whiteness of the snow, a special light and then Nature's divine forces working on it all the time. There are mirages, waves swaying to and fro, deep vibrations and vertical stripes of various colours. It slumbers divinely and the light, the clouds and the wind make it more changeable than the sea.

It is essentially feminine, just as the Lake of the Four Cantons is essentially masculine, and under its smiling looks there is evidently some mystery. It looks gentle,

but one feels that it is dangerous. The triangle of the Latin sails, the huge transport boats, with their scissor-shape masts and the swans and sea-gulls finish it in the most harmonious way. The busy, whistling steamers, which divide the water without any respect, seem almost like a wrong note, and yet their movement forms large waves which animate it, and the sound of their paddle-wheels on its waters is heard for a very, very long way.

Its sunsets are wonderful symphonies, soft, tender and infinitely varied. Yesterday, above the blue lake, and above the mountains which are bluer still, was a wide band of orange colour, mingled with red and mauve, and various shades of yellow and green. All the tones and half tones slowly reached their maximum intensity and then, just as slowly, they all melted away, leaving a warm gold-coloured sky and out of this sky the evening star emerged, enormous, very bright, and with the whiteness of a diamond. For a long time it was quite alone and it seemed as though no other star dared to put in an appearance in its presence. The sight of this living world, suspended by invisible forces over a little lake on our Earth, a little slumbering lake, was wonderfully beautiful and filled one's soul with immense adoration. The scene will, perhaps, never seem so perfect again.

Lake Leman is a kind of charmer, but its magic does not act on everyone. When once it takes possession of you, it never leaves you again. It makes you from thenceforth live its life, it makes you either sad or gay, it sports with you and this is sometimes very irritating.

Philippe Monnier, the Genevese writer, is one who has felt it most deeply. I ought not to speak of it after him, perhaps.

The lake captivated the heart and mind of the Empress of Austria. It made her leave her Palace at Corfu. It lured her on to her death, but the death was merciful and without pain, as she was struck down when she was on her way to the lake. The gods, our masters, weave fine romance. She would, no doubt, have preferred sleeping the eternal sleep on the shores of her beloved lake, but the Imperial vault claimed her. Her statue only is in the Territet cemetery. As no Imperial vault will claim me, I hope that I may rest in this sweet cemetery, amidst the exiles, the uprooted, the wanderers and the forgotten, for there, certainly, I shall never be quite dead.

It is not the lake only which lets me see the spring-time of its soul. Territet does, too, and also the country about Territet. The snow has disappeared from the peaks, the slopes are covered with flowers, the fields are white with the narcissus and with lilies of the valley, and the birds are singing wildly. It is in the presence of this renewal of Nature, of this beauty, that I wanted to write the last pages of this volume, the last pages, alas!

I can scarcely believe I have really come to the end; and, at any rate, it is with great regret.

I have worked at it for two years and a half, but only one year with the pen in my hand. How long have I had it within me? How long has Nature been at work on it?

No author can ever know that!

*The Heart of Life!*

A little thrill runs through me as I think of the fine unconsciousness that such a title betokens. Legions of human beings have already attempted this exploration. Some of them have come back with the consciousness of

their immortality and others with a sensation of the Neant. I, too, set out on this voyage of discovery. I did not take a celestial or imaginary route, but a very earthly one, the one on which I should come across the dwelling of mankind and the nest of the bird, the one along which I should meet with sorrow and joy, good and evil, the one on which people are born, love and die. . . .

Huber, a Genevese painter of the eighteenth century, wrote the following words: "If all the turns,—backwards and forwards, which birds of prey trace in the sky, could be taken down in such a way as to remain visible, and if this were then copied exactly, we might say that we possessed a manuscript written by the hand of God."

The Earth appears to me like a divine manuscript. The romances, dramas, comedies, which one sees here are so many manuscripts that the gods write and that mankind lives.

I have tried to spell out a few of them with my objective eye. On seeing the marvellous weaving of events, the grouping of individuals, the — close linking together of things, the irony and the humour which certain coincidences denote, coincidences which men stupidly attribute to chance, I have said again to myself that Providence is the most misunderstood of authors, and I have found myself pitying Providence as one of my fellow authors, and perhaps more sincerely than I might pity a fellow author.

What Providence does is more astounding than the things about which one reads. It is a proof of great simple mindedness to be astonished at that.

At the end of the road along which I have been travelling, I have found the certainty of our continuity

and of our future. I have comprehended that we are being worked upon by the radio-activity of the Eternal God, just as the alumina is worked upon in the bowels of the earth by the radio-activity of certain substances, and I believe that we, like them, will be transmuted into "precious stones."

I have not penetrated very far into *The Heart of Life.*

Very many explorers have set out for the North Pole and for the South Pole.

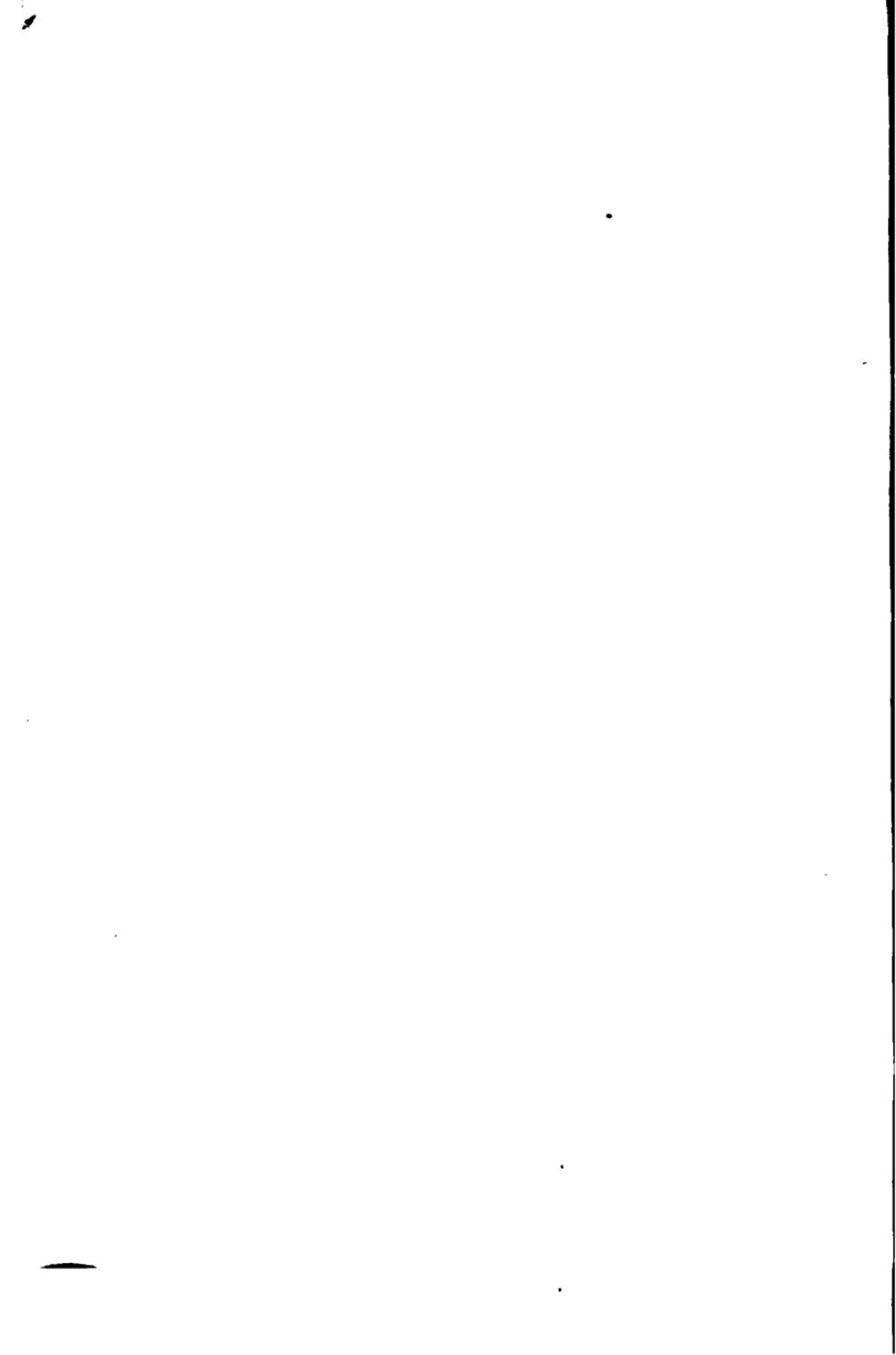
They have not arrived there, but still they did set out. We must always set out, as that is the real merit.

Others, and still others later on, will take up the unfinished task, and, in the triumph of the one who attains the goal, will be the triumph of all those who have made the venture. In the glory of the one who *sees* God, will be the glory of all those who have sought Him; for here below, and everywhere throughout the whole Universe, everything is linked together, everything holds together and, as Francis Thompson, the English philosopher-poet, so marvellously puts it:

"That thou canst not stir a flower  
Without troubling of a star."

THE END

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Pierre de Coulevain's

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